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#### **Press Release**

#### **GoFundMe Launched to Put Formerly Incarcerated to Work Sewing Clergy Robes in Baltimore**

Baltimore, MD – November 11, 2020 -- Through the efforts of a nonprofit social enterprise, The Chill Station, a handful of formerly incarcerated citizens will be hired to manufacture ceremonial attire for clergy. The Chill Station, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, has initiated the project under the brand, Lifting Labels LLC.

The Chill Station, Inc. (DBA Lifting Labels) is a community-based nonprofit established to reduce poverty, create sustainable jobs and improve the quality of life for people returning to their communities in Baltimore City after incarceration. Lifting Labels will employ formerly incarcerated men and women to handcraft quality ceremonial choir robes, church pulpit apparel, academic regalia and judicial robes. The first stage involves clergy robes, which will be available to order in January 2021.

Rev. Chester France, Jr., a retired Chaplain for the Maryland Prison System, founded The Chill Station to address the difficulty of finding jobs for the more than 2,000 who return to Baltimore City annually from prison. Knowing that many had sewing skills - thanks to a program where inmates manufacture prison uniforms – he envisioned a business making clergy and other ceremonial robes.

#### **Partners in Social Enterprise**

Rev. France, who spent 28 years in the insurance industry before becoming a prison chaplain from which he retired, completed in 2019 the 3-day Innovation Works GSBI® Boost program and a six-month business accelerator program developed by Santa Clara University's Miller Center in partnership with Baltimore's Innovation Works. Innovation Works is a Baltimore-based resource network that seeks to help build 250 social enterprises in Baltimore over the next 10 years, employ 5,000 residents and attract \$100 million of investment to Baltimore.

Rev. France and The Chill Station won a \$5,000 award competition last year through Open Works, a maker space founded in 2016 to rebuild Baltimore's manufacturing economy from the grassroots up.

The public is invited to learn more about the fundraising effort, help with donations and share the link broadly: <https://gf.me/u/y68jhz>

Donors of \$50 or more to the fundraising effort will receive board member Chris Wilson's book, ***The Master Plan: From Life in Prison to a Life of Purpose***, by donating and submitting the mailing address to [gandsleder@comcast.net](mailto:gandsleder@comcast.net).

For more information about Lifting Labels and its plans for manufacturing clergy robes, visit [www.liftinglabels.org](http://www.liftinglabels.org).

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