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Bridging the Gap in the Federal Safety Net: Business-led Employee Retention and Advancement Solution Demonstrates Social Impact

Grand Rapids, Michigan – Historically, federal support helped buffer the blow of employee economic hardship, but that safety net is shrinking. The pressure is on, not just for workers, but for those who rely on them.

As economic times grow tougher, employee basic needs for job retention and financial stability are expected to increase. “Worker retention is no longer just an HR talking point—it’s a company survival strategy,” said Amy Waters, Irwin Seating Senior Human Resources Manager and Lakeshore ERN® Member Employer. “Employee performance and longevity gains come from workforce investment and are key to business and community sustainability.”

According to the ERN USA 2025 KPI Report, Employer Resource Networks® served 5,394 employees at 167 employer member companies in 26 ERNs® in nine states. Onsite Success Coaches provided 10,489 supportive employment solutions, achieving 15.3% average utilization.

Funding cuts force a re-thinking of how communities alleviate poverty, improve lives, and strengthen businesses. “When employee strain gets too heavy, workers leave, and when they leave, companies lose training, trust, and talent – a large investment,” said Rob Montana, CEO of Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and Administrator of the Tompkins County ERN®. “Businesses, large and small, are finding bottom-line benefits to supporting their workforce.”

Employer Resource Networks® (ERNs®) provide onsite successful coach solutions centered around employee retention and advancement, making the most of collaborative funds and partnerships. “State government and foundations are stepping up where federal aid has backed off,” said James Vander Hulst, CDO, ERN USA. “Nonprofits are tapping into the resilience they are known for, leveraging creative funding and partnerships to keep people afloat. Employers can do the same, but in a way that promotes both employee and company stability.”

“Personal pressures can reduce productivity, increase absenteeism, and lead to turnover, especially when employees feel unsupported,” said James. “With childcare costs averaging \$10,500 annually for one child, and the broader financial strain showing up in mental health concerns—it’s no surprise one in four employees consider quitting due to these pressures. Collectively, we can change that.”

In 2026, ERN USA will target healthcare, hospitality, and manufacturing industries with special focus on long-term care where retention needs are at a critical state in maintaining quality care. Metrics and technology continue to build with planned expansion of ERN® Data Solutions’ Salesforce CRM.

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