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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

**Commissioner/EDC Executive Director O’Dea and Jersey City Mayor Fulop
Launch *Helmets to Hardhats* to Provide Career Training and Job Placement
Opportunities for Women and Minority Veterans**

JERSEY CITY – Today, **Mayor Steven M. Fulop** joined **Commissioner William O’Dea**, who is also the **Elizabeth Development Company (EDC)** Executive Director, to announce the launch of “*Helmets to Hardhats*”, a program designed to help National Guard Reserve, retired, and transitioning active-duty military members connect with career and training opportunities in the construction industry, and assist with job placement.

Utilizing an over \$300,000 grant awarded to the EDC from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the women and minority veteran program will launch its first initiative in Jersey City to serve Hudson County veterans and will soon expand to serve Bergen, Essex, and Union Counties.

“We have been very successful in getting women and minorities into construction union apprenticeships and are excited with now having the resources provided by the state to recruit and train military veterans so they too can have a career as a laborer, carpenter, plumber, or truck driver,” said **Commissioner O’Dea**. “They gave for our country, and now we can give back to them.”

In Jersey City, Mayor Fulop’s Office is providing critical support to the application process. The Jersey City Employment and Training Program has also been instrumental throughout the implementation process. Commitments for service are being received through the Division of Veterans Affairs and the Hudson County/Jersey City Workforce Development Board.

“I’m one of the seven percent of Americans who are veterans,” stated **Mayor Fulop, a veteran of the United States Marine Corps**. “Jersey City is a diverse community and home to many veterans who proudly serve their country and return home to find themselves in need of work. This program provides that direct connection to meaningful employment, which can often be a major challenge for veterans reintegrating into civilian life.”

Of equal importance is the support of our partners in the Building Trades. This grant is made possible by strong partnerships with the various trades that serve the area. Pat Kelleher, President of the Hudson County Building Trades, was instrumental in garnering support for the application. LIUNA Local #3,

OPCMIA Local #29, Teamsters Local 560, and Carpenters Local #253 all provided verbal and written support.

“This grant is vital to increase the participation of women and minority veterans in the building trades. I have been working with Mayor Fulop and Commissioner O’Dea for many years on achieving this goal. We recognize this Helmets to Hardhats program will provide the resources to reach and serve our veterans effectively and serve as a pathway for our vets to achieve a rewarding career with our affiliated trades. The Hudson County Building and Construction Trades Council is committed to ensuring the success of this program,” said **Pat Kelleher, President of the Hudson County Building Trades.**

“It is a true honor to, once again, participate in the Helmets to Hardhats for Women and Minority Veterans program. Partnering with Mayor Fulop and William O’Dea to help the diverse men and women in our community transition from active military duty to a career is a reflection on how forming partnerships can make a difference. We look forward to providing women and minority veterans with not just a job, but a career. Being part of the Union, guarantees these veterans will have a solid career path that includes fair wages, benefits, and a safe working environment,” **Paul Roldan, Business Manager, LIUNA Local #3.**

In addition to hands-on construction training, OSHA-30 certification, and placement assistance, every effort will be made to ensure the long-term success of each veteran that participates in the program. EDC will be working with the American Legion to ensure the program is accessible to the maximum number of veterans possible.

“The American Legion stands ready to assist the EDC in providing the information for the Helmets to Hardhats program by mobilizing our employment committee and our vast veteran networks in Hudson, Bergen, Essex, and Union Counties and ensuring that any veteran interested in the program is provided the opportunity. We look forward to working with all those involved and thank you for your veteran support,” concluded **Jack Dunne, American Legion State Vice Commander.**

About EDC:

Since 1997, EDC has promoted the economic, civic, and social welfare of the greater City of Elizabeth area; EDC seeks to improve the well-being of the communities we serve by providing a comprehensive program of economic development. EDC offers diverse financial programs to assist local businesses in accessing capital and technical assistance and offers workforce development programs aimed at providing in-demand industry training and placement assistance to residents. Our focus on creating opportunities for women, minorities, and veterans has allowed EDC to extend its service area to Union, Essex, Hudson, and Bergen counties.

Additional information may be found at www.edcnj.org | Facebook: @EDCJobTraining | Twitter: @EDCNJ1 | LinkedIn: Elizabeth Development Company

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