**NAWBO Columbus Plays Critical Role in Ohio WBE Program Launch:**

**Women Business Owners to Get Certified & Increase Revenue**

COLUMBUS - Today the state of Ohio launched a first-of-its kind certification program to support women business owners by creating more government contracting opportunities. Spearheaded by NAWBO Columbus, the Women’s Business Enterprise (WBE) Certification is the result of two years of work by public and private advocates for women in business.

“The Ohio Women’s Business Enterprise Program will be a valuable asset for businesses throughout Ohio who are looking to partner with the state,” said Governor Mike DeWine. “This new program is particularly important as small businesses, including women-owned businesses, have been hit hard by the ongoing pandemic.”

NAWBO Columbus worked closely with the Ohio’s Division of Administrative Services (DAS) to bring the certification to fruition during this critical time.

A substantial wealth gap exists for women-owned businesses in Ohio. Women business owners generate 78 percent less revenue than male-owned businesses and contribute 85 percent less in payroll, as shown in a study by Measurement Resources, LLC. Additionally, WBO’s have limited access to government contracts. At the federal level, government agencies finally reached a modest 5 percent goal of small-business contracts for women-owned businesses after being set more than 20 years ago.

“This is such a significant step. It will help all women-owned businesses across Ohio achieve equality. While there is still much work to be done, we are proud of the work NAWBO Columbus has been able to do to make this happen,” said Michelle Casper, President of the Columbus chapter.

"WBE certification is a game changer. Women business owners can now compete for business contracts in an equal playing field that maximizes the opportunity for a win,” added Merry Korn, President and CEO of Pearl Interactive and a NAWBO member.

The Ohio WBE certification program creates more visibility for female-owned businesses. The certification will connect women with more direct opportunities to receive government contracts and business opportunities from other large businesses.

The new program will also create greater access to information about business opportunities for WBO’s and will help them compete for contracts in other states on equal footing with other women-owned businesses.

NAWBO Columbus is proud to work with DAS to launch this program. The organization will be co-hosting an informational session on the certification on October 15th. To get more information on the session or how to get certified please visit the NAWBO Columbus website at [www.nawbocbus.org](http://www.nawbocbus.org) or email DAS at das-eod@das.ohio.gov.

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NAWBO Columbus is part of the National Association of Women Business Owners. The mission of NAWBO Columbus is to empower all women business owners to overcome challenges, fully realize their true potential and make their mark on the world! The organization does this through three mission pillars: advocacy, community, and transformation.