**Sample National PEO Week Op-Ed**

*Below you’ll find a sample op-ed providing a foundation for you to customize to your business and community before submitting to a local publication. Please note that submission guidelines vary, so check with the publication’s website or opinion editor for requirements before submitting.*

Happy National PEO Week!

Never heard of a PEO? Chances are, you will soon.

A PEO – professional employer organization – helps small businesses by taking back-office paperwork off their plate and letting them focus on their business. PEOs provide payroll, benefits, workers’ comp, regulatory compliance assistance, and scores of other HR services to more than 173,000 small and mid-sized businesses across the U.S., collectively employing more than 4 million people. PEO partner with businesses in software, construction, media, clothing, finance and dozens of other sectors spanning every pocket of the country, not to mention mom-and-pop businesses on Main Street.

My PEO is part of a $270 billion industry that prides itself on being an ally and supporter of the little guy and gal. We provide small and mid-sized businesses access to essential services -- like cutting-edge technology and competitive health insurance – typically only available at larger firms. This allows them to punch above their weight, grow faster, and experience lower employee turnover.

PEOs are particularly indispensable when the going gets tough. During the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were on the frontlines as a true partner, invested in helping our clients survive as they faced layoffs, decimated sales, closure, and increasing disconnect with their local communities. They needed our help. So, PEOs banged on the doors of Congress to help clients across the country secure the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans that were the difference between life and death. We helped clients navigate the loan forgiveness process, support their employees, apply for available tax credits, and get to a place where they knew they could rebuild and emerge stronger than they were pre-pandemic. In fact, businesses that partner with a PEO were nearly 60 percent less likely to have permanently closed than those that did not use a PEO during the pandemic.

***EXPLAIN HERE THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED AND HOW YOU HELPED CLIENTS WEATHER THE PANDEMIC STORM***

After the pandemic, yet another huge issue has surfaced for small business: the Employee Retention Tax Credit (ERTC). Passed as part of the pandemic relief aimed at small business, the ERTC is a refundable tax credit for businesses that continued to pay employees while shut down due to the pandemic or had significant declines in revenue. As of today, there are almost one million small businesses waiting in a backlog at the IRS for their money. Some have even gone out of businesses while waiting.

PEOs have become the voice of small business on this issue, advocating for Congress to nudge the IRS to do its job and ensure that every small business gets the funds they are entitled to before it is too late. We’ll keep pushing the issue until then, because that’s what PEOs do: support small businesses and help them navigate through government red tape.

In fact, in the last 12 years the PEO industry has quadrupled in size as the regulatory landscape gets increasingly complicated and more and more businesses turn to PEOs for back-office assistance. The total employment represented by the PEO industry is roughly the same as the combined number of employees for the five of the 10 largest employers in the U.S.

And as we grow, we will remain a friend of and a crusader for small and mid-sized businesses – here in (state/town) and in Washington, DC.