



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Jina Belcher Named Executive Director of New River Gorge Regional Development Authority**

**Beckley, W.Va. (Nov. 12, 2020)** – Jina Belcher will become the executive director of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) on December 1, as approved by its board of directors.

“Jina’s excellent work at NRGRDA and her strategic vision give us confidence that we will continue to make strides to reach our full potential,” said the Hon. Robert Rappold, chairman of the NRGRDA board and mayor of Beckley.

NRGRDA’s mission is to initiate, facilitate and support the economic and community development efforts within the counties of Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh and Summers.

“We have been blessed with great teamwork and talented new hires who are able to leverage federal and private sector investments,” said Belcher, a Concord University graduate who grew up in Welch. “We are on the cusp of taking our proactive economic and community development to the next level,” she said.

“How incredibly forward thinking that, 32 years ago, regional partners from Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Summers counties sat around a table and developed the first, and still largest, regional economic development authority in the state of West Virginia,” said Belcher. “I’m thrilled to continue the last three decades of regional impact across the New River Gorge region. Moving forward, NRGRDA will continue to focus on new company recruitment, business retention and expansion, and business and entrepreneurship support. NRGRDA is proud of its WV Hive program that has created more than 150 new jobs since its creation in 2016, and out

of the proven needs, created the Country Roads Angel Network, that strives to connect thriving businesses with a network of angel investors that are ready to invest in West Virginia businesses. These programs are an integral part of the work NRGRDA is committed to across the region.”

After starting her own business at 16 years of age, Belcher was the first high school junior to ever receive the McKelvey Foundation Entrepreneurial Scholarship. After graduating from Concord University in 2009 with a B.S. in Recreation and Tourism Management with an emphasis in Event Planning and Promotions, Belcher returned to Welch to assist her family in expanding the only non-profit food pantry in McDowell County. While there, she served as Trust Systems Administrator for seven years at MCNB Bank and Trust Company.

In 2016, Belcher joined the Coalfield Development Corporation. As Chief Business Officer, Belcher worked closely with those in government, the private sector and entrepreneurs to strengthen social enterprises across Appalachia. While there, Belcher’s work in capital access and small business development organically crossed paths with NRGRDA.

In February 2019, Belcher became NRGRDA’s Director of Business Development and later transitioned into the role of Deputy Director in early 2020. Combining her previous community development skills with her background in finance and social enterprise allowed her to provide the New River Gorge region with resources and expertise needed to grow the thriving economy of Southern West Virginia. On October 19, the NRGRDA board named Belcher interim Executive Director to take the reins of the organization effective December 2020.

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**About New River Gorge Regional Development Authority:** The New River Gorge Regional Development Authority’s (NRGRDA) mission is to initiate, facilitate and support the economic and community development efforts within the counties of Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh and Summers located in this region of southern West Virginia. NRGRDA stimulates the regional economy through business expansion and retention efforts, including an extensive portfolio of financial services; the management of sites for new companies locating to our region; and serving as a point of access for local service providers which offer a variety of technical assistance for business owners.