

January 5, 2017

Senator Robert Menendez
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Menendez,

As you consider how Congress can help hardworking Americans this year, we, the undersigned 60 New Jersey-based organizations, strongly urge you to **make expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for low-wage workers not raising children a top priority**. Currently, *7.5 million* of these workers are taxed into or deeper into poverty, mainly because they are largely or entirely left out of the EITC. No working American should be taxed into poverty in this country.

The EITC is one of our nation's best tools to promote work and reduce poverty. In our state, about 600,000 working households receive the EITC, which helps them keep more of what they earn, meet their basic needs, and get ahead. But the EITC completely shuts out low-wage workers aged 21-24 who aren't raising children – and largely shuts out those workers aged 25 and over who aren't raising kids, as their EITC is too small to offset their income and payroll taxes. For example, someone in this group working year-round, full-time at the minimum wage gets virtually no EITC.

Their inadequate or nonexistent EITC fails to protect these low-wage workers from being taxed into – or deeper into – poverty, leaving them with too little take-home pay to cover food, housing, transportation to work, and other necessities. It also fails to provide a meaningful work incentive, which is a hallmark of the EITC's pro-work success for workers raising children.

We know that you understand how important this expansion of the EITC is, and we thank you for your leadership on this issue. We are also grateful that you co-sponsored the proposal from Senator Brown in the 114th Congress (S. 1012), which would have lowered the eligibility age to 21 and boosted the maximum credit for workers not raising children. Sen. Brown's proposal (included in S. 1012) would have helped 425,000 low-wage workers in our state, including 253,000 workers of color, 122,000 young workers and 9,000 current and former members of the military.

A similar proposal from House Speaker Ryan would reach 343,000 workers in our state and make significant progress toward the goal of not taxing workers into poverty.

A diverse group of workers would benefit from such an expansion, including working parents who don't live with their kids but want to help provide for them, veterans and members of the military, and young workers trying to get a foothold in the labor market. A more adequate EITC would likely encourage and reward work, boost employment, and increase financial stability.

We recognize it's too early to tell what specific opportunities there may be in Congress this year to address the EITC, but we are hopeful you will pursue any and all options. For example, President-elect Trump has indicated one of his top priorities is a jobs/infrastructure bill. This legislation seems likely to present a prime opportunity to expand the EITC for these workers, given the EITC's job-promoting benefits and the bipartisan support for this proposal. Extending the pro-work success of the EITC to this largely left-out group would fit perfectly with increasing investments in infrastructure. There's also a chance this EITC expansion could be included in the major tax bill that President-elect Donald Trump and Republican leaders in Congress are reportedly planning for 2017. We feel a responsibility to ensure that struggling workers – such as those who are currently excluded from the EITC – receive tax relief as part of this legislation.

Working Americans should not be taxed into poverty. We ask you to actively work to address this problem by expanding the EITC for low-wage workers not raising children this year.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

1199 SEIU
ACCSES New Jersey
The Affordable Homes Group
Amalgamated Transit Union – New Jersey State Council
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District 1
Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey
Bethel AME Church (Woodbury) – Rev. Charles Boyer, Pastor
BlueWave New Jersey
Catholic Charities – Diocese of Trenton
Communications Workers of America - New Jersey
Communications Workers of America - Local 1039
Communications Workers of America - Local 1081
CUMAC
Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless
Family Voices New Jersey
The FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties
Garden State Equality
Greater New Jersey United Methodist Church – Palisades District
Hackensack Environmental Justice Green Drinks
Health Professionals and Allied Employees
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Hasbrouck Heights
HomeFront
Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey
Hyacinth AIDS Foundation
Ironbound Community Corporation
Jewish Family Service of Atlantic & Cape May Counties
League of Women Voters of New Jersey
Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey
The Mercer Alliance to End Homelessness
Monarch Housing Associates
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People New Jersey State Conference
National Organization for Women of New Jersey
National Organization for Women – Northern New Jersey Chapter
Newark Environmental Justice Green Drinks
Newark Teachers Union
New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice
New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence
New Jersey Coalition to End Homelessness
New Jersey Education Association
New Jersey Main Street Alliance
New Jersey Policy Perspective

New Jersey State Association of Jewish Federations
New Jersey Tenant Organization
New Jersey Work Environment Council
New Jersey Working Families Alliance
Parent Education Organizing Council
Paterson Environmental Justice Green Drinks
Philabundance
Region 9 Housing
RESULTS Bernardsville
Service Employees International Union, New Jersey State Council
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)
Supportive Housing Association
Tierra Madres
Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK)
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of New Jersey
United Way of Northern New Jersey
The Wei