



For immediate release
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policymattersohio.org/taxmap

Map of Ohio's free tax services to aid working families Release marks National EITC Awareness Day

A new interactive map locating tax preparation services around Ohio will help families connect to free assistance, avoid the unnecessary expense of paid preparers, and keep more of their tax refunds, according to Ohio CASH, the state's asset-building coalition.

"This new map will help working families find free tax-preparation in their communities," said Kalitha Williams, policy liaison for Policy Matters Ohio. "Many families don't know about services that are already available to them."

Last year, only 2 percent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit recipients in Ohio took advantage of free tax services. But Ohio has a tremendous free tax-preparation network for low and moderate-income families. Providers include two IRS-funded programs – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly – and others run by the AARP Foundation and the Ohio Benefit Bank. Trained, certified volunteers completed returns for 119,000 Ohioans in 2013.

The map release also marks Jan. 31 as the 8th National Earned Income Tax Awareness Day. The EITC, a federal tax credit for low- and moderate-income working people, rewards work and offsets federal payroll and income taxes. Ohio recently passed its own EITC.

"Families use the EITC to pay for basic needs like housing, childcare, and emergency savings," said Kalitha Williams, policy liaison for Policy Matters Ohio. "Free tax services are a great way for families claiming the EITC to keep money in their pockets."

The EITC, the most powerful anti-poverty program in the country, lifted nearly 7 million households out of poverty last year. In Ohio, nearly 950,000 families benefited from the program last year, receiving over \$2 billion in credits and an average refund of \$2,307.

The map, created by CASH members that provide tax-prep services, features more than 160 free tax sites and includes information about making appointments, hours of operation, household income limits, and more. Ohioans not claiming the EITC are encouraged to contact sites about available services. Most sites will complete and file taxes returns for families with incomes below \$52,000; others have higher household income limits.

The map is online at www.policymattersohio.org/taxmap.

Ohio CASH (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) does research, capacity building and public policy advocacy to protect consumers, increase income, and help people build savings and assets.

Our goal is to improve the financial and economic conditions for low- and moderate-income families and communities. Only by helping families build, save and protect their income can we end the cycle of poverty. Ohio CASH is a project of Policy Matters Ohio.