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Map of Ohio's free tax services helps working families More than 330 sites available for 2015 tax season

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

"This new map will help working families throughout Ohio find free tax-preparation sites in their local communities," said Kalitha Williams, policy liaison for Policy Matters Ohio. "Many families don't know about these no-cost services."

Despite Ohio's tremendous network of free tax-preparation services for low- and moderate-income families, less than 3 percent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit recipients in Ohio took advantage of these services last year. Providers include two IRS-funded programs – Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) – and others run by the AARP Foundation and the Ohio Benefit Bank. All the volunteers have received extensive training and are certified to complete returns by the IRS.

The EITC, the most powerful anti-poverty program in the country, lifted more than 6 million families, including 3 million children, out of poverty last year. More than 944,000 Ohio families benefited from the program last year, receiving \$2.18 billion in credits and an average refund of \$2,309.

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

The map features more than 330 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 \$53,000; others have higher household income limits.

The map is online at <http://bit.ly/15CWCTh>

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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.