

## California approves a tax credit to more low-income families, including undocumented workers.

Marielle Argueza Jul 3, 2020



During shelter in place, the undocumented community was hard hit as many work in impacted industries like agriculture and tourism. COPA pushed hard to give them more than the state's one time cash payment of (up to) \$500.

Nic Coury

In initial talks with state legislatures, the organizers and leaders of Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action, or COPA were not too sure that the state would budge on who would qualify for California's Earned Income Tax credit, or CalEITC. The tax credit, is intended to give cash back to the poorest working families, but as Covid-19 hit it was clear the threshold to qualify for the credit was not reflective of who the poorest were in the state.

In COPA's eyes, structural change was needed in the form of extending the tax credit to more taxpayers, including undocumented workers. The monetary relief the state circulated to lessen the economic blow of Covid-19 was a one time payment of up to \$500 per individual and the deadline to qualify for the aid ended in June 30. This is in to comparison to the Federal CARES Act which provide a one time payment of \$1,200.

But that changed on June 27 when Gavin Newsom expanded the tax credit to include households making \$30,000 or less and undocumented people who met that threshold with at least one child under six.

COPA along with other organizations across the state release a joint statement on June 30 claiming a victory. "One out of ten workers in California is undocumented, and their labor has largely fallen into work deemed 'essential' throughout the pandemic—in agriculture, food distribution and service, elder care and child care among other occupations," the statement reads.

The statement goes on to say that it's not quite the full expansion that they wanted to extend to all undocumented taxpaying workers who have families or not, but it's a victory none the less. "It's definitely a victory and has been despite a tough budget year," says COPA organizer Mayra Bernabe.

Though the income threshold has been adjusted from year to year, in 2019 households or qualified individuals had to make around \$24,000 or less. Which Bernabe points out is indeed very low-income in a state that is an expensive place to work and live. "Just the fact the threshold has been pushed up to include more people is a step in the right direction," she says.

Until then, the work is ongoing for COPA and their state partners and allies. "It's a conversation that we will continue," she says. "It's a small victory in itself, but this was a local issue, turned state policy."

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