

California Faith and Community Leaders Declare a Victory for Essential Workers

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Contact:

Faith and community leaders with the California Industrial Areas Foundation celebrate a victory for essential workers today after Governor Newsom signed a budget that includes an expansion of the California Earned Income Tax Credit (Cal EITC) to undocumented workers with young children.

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.

“What we have been pressing for is justice for essential workers, not charity,” said Fr. Arturo Corral, with Our Lady Queen of Angels Catholic Church, One LA. “It cannot be disputed that immigrant workers are bearing the brunt of pandemic-related health risks in order to keep all our boats afloat. We could not provide food for our families without their labor. They pay billions in local and state taxes, and they contribute over 180 billion dollars to our economy. And they have been ruthlessly left out of federal relief. So Governor Newsom’s decision to include these taxpayers in the Cal EITC means that our state is finally beginning to recognize our immigrant workforce and to value their labor.”

On May 5, 2020, over 1,200 California IAF leaders convened on Zoom, along with 10 Bishops and 9 state legislators to press Governor Newsom to expand the Cal EITC. More than 1,000 faith and community leaders signed on to a letter in support of the expansion, and in the thick of budget negotiations organized hundreds of leaders to send letters to the Governor and to the top leadership of the senate and assembly.

“Under the states’ current economic situation, we are happy to be able to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit program for ITIN filing California families,” said Senator Maria Elena Durazo, a major proponent for the expansion. “Thank you to the California IAF members for continuing to push for this inclusion, which United Way sees as a fundamental tool to move families out of poverty. With your continued advocacy, California will move out of this global pandemic, a more united and inclusive state.”

While not a full expansion to all undocumented workers, the tax credit will help tens of thousands of families with at least one child under the age of six who pay their taxes using an ITIN. Some households may receive up to \$2,600 each year, depending on their income and family size, a significant investment in some of the most vulnerable families impacted by the pandemic.

“We commend Governor Newsom and state legislators for investing in families, especially during a deficit year,” said Rabbi Susan Leider with Congregation Kol Shofar, Marin Organizing Committee. “We know they have faced enormous pressure to cut back, and instead they have paid in. This tax credit is not just a one time handout, but will help

families year after year. Our leaders have been working for months to make sure our essential workers aren't left behind, and this is a huge step forward.”

Community leaders celebrate today, but also know that there is much more to do to buffer immigrant and low-income workers from the health and economic risks ahead. With recent economic forecasts predicting a slow economic recovery, IAF organizations continue to organize hundreds of conversations on the ground, to build power and to uncover other avenues for action.

“We are concerned that our low income and undocumented families will continue to be the hardest hit as we inch our way out of this pandemic,” said Maria Elena Manzo, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Salinas, and a leader with COPA. “We’ll need to keep expanding this tax credit to reach more people. To that end, we look forward to continuing our meetings with the Governor’s office and with our state and local legislators. We will need to find innovative ways to invest in our families, in their health, their housing, their job training and their employment prospects in difficult months ahead.”

The California IAF represents 8 broad-based organizations from across the state, covering Southern California, the Inland Empire, Central Coast, Bay Area and parts of the Central Valley and Far North. Local organizations work with faith communities, unions, schools and other institutions to teach people the habits and practices of public life. All organizations are nonpartisan, multi-issue and multilingual.

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