



Faith, Community Leaders Praise Tax Break for Undocumented Workers

State budget expands California Earned Income Tax Credit to some undocumented workers with young children

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Faith and community leaders with the California Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) celebrated a victory Tuesday after Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a budget that includes an expansion of the California Earned Income Tax Credit (Cal EITC) to undocumented workers with young children.

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 6 who pay their taxes using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). Some households may receive up to \$2,600 each year, depending on their income and family size.

According to IAF, undocumented immigrants represent 10% of the California workforce, 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 of 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 to our economy. And they have been ruthlessly left out of federal relief.”

On May 5, more than 1,200 California IAF leaders, along with 10 Bishops and nine state legislators, convened on Zoom to press 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 they organized hundreds of leaders to send letters to the governor and to the top leadership of the senate and assembly.

“We commend Gov. 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.”

But many IAF organizations say 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 recovery](#), organizations continue to organize hundreds of conversations.

“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.