

Immediate Release

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Contact: Seth DiStefano or Sean O’Leary, 304-720-8682

West Virginia Poverty Rate Unchanged A State Earned Income Tax Credit Would Help Struggling Working Families

(Charleston, WV) Too many West Virginians struggled to make ends meet in 2015, so West Virginia needs to take immediate action to pass a state Earned Income Tax Credit which would make it easier for people to build a secure future.

Nearly one in five West Virginians struggled to afford basic necessities in 2015, with a family of four too often living on less than \$24,000 a year. Almost one in four West Virginia children are growing up in families that can’t afford the basics necessary for a good start to life because they make so little.

The number of people struggling economically remains too high and is holding back our economy and hampering our kids’ futures.

“A West Virginia working families tax credit would open the doors of opportunity for these people by helping them keep more of the money they earn while working at low-wage jobs,” stated Seth DiStefano, State EITC Campaign Coordinator with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. “Our state will be a better place when all West Virginians have the opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their kids. A West Virginia Earned Income Tax Credit is a big part of making this a reality.”

A state earned income tax credit, set at 15% of the federal credit, would supplement the existing federal earned income tax credit and benefit 158,000 working West Virginia families. It would provide an average credit of \$332 a year to those families and put \$52 million back into local economies in West Virginia. Twenty-six other states and the District of Columbia already have a state earned income tax credit.

West Virginia highlights from the 2015 American Community Survey include the following:

- An estimated 321,583 West Virginians lived in poverty in 2015, for a total poverty rate of 17.9 percent. The state’s poverty rate remains statistically unchanged since the recession. West Virginia has the 7th highest poverty rate among the 50 states.
- West Virginia’s child poverty rate in 2015 was 24.6 percent, with no statistical difference from 2014. An estimated 90,727 children lived in poverty in 2015. West Virginia had the 7th highest child poverty rate among the 50 states.
- Poverty is much worse for African Americans in West Virginia. The state’s poverty rate for African Americans was 28.4 percent in 2015.
- Seniors in West Virginia are less likely to be in poverty than the rest of the state. The state’s senior poverty rate in 2015 was 8.5 percent, roughly half of the state’s total poverty rate. An estimated 27,957 West Virginians over the age of 65 living in poverty.
- Poverty rates decrease for adults with higher levels of education. In 2015, the poverty rate for West Virginians with at least a bachelor’s degree was 4.1 percent, while it was 15.6 percent for those with just

a high school diploma. Poverty was highest among those who did not graduate from high school, at 28.9 percent.

- Women in West Virginia face higher poverty rates than men. In 2015, West Virginia’s poverty rate for women was 19.7 percent, compared to 16.1 percent for men.
- Unemployed West Virginians are five times more likely to be living in poverty as employed West Virginians. In 2015 the poverty rate for employed West Virginians was 7.8 percent, while it was 40.2 percent for the unemployed.
- West Virginia’s median household income was an estimated \$42,019 in 2015. Median household income measures the income of the typical household – or the household in the middle of the income distribution – and serves as a good indicator for how the middle class is faring. West Virginia’s median household income did not increase in the past year, but has increased since 2011. In 2015, West Virginia has the 3rd lowest median household income among the 50 states.

West Virginia Local Metropolitan Area Poverty and Median Household Income 2015

	Poverty Rate	Median Household Income
Beckley, WV Metro Area	18.0%	\$37,101
Bluefield, WV-VA Micro Area	17.9%	\$37,965
Charleston, WV Metro Area	18.6%	\$42,526
Clarksburg, WV Micro Area	15.0%	\$46,903
Huntington-Ashland, WV-KY-OH Metro Area	20.1%	\$42,237
Morgantown, WV Metro Area	20.3%	\$45,941
Parkersburg-Vienna, WV Metro Area	17.3%	\$40,547
Weirton-Steubenville, WV-OH Metro Area	16.0%	\$43,452
Wheeling, WV-OH Metro Area	11.7%	\$47,726
West Virginia - Statewide	17.9%	\$42,019