

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2016

The Honorable John Boozman  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Financial Services  
and General Government  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher A. Coons  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Financial Services  
and General Government  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Coons:

As you begin your work on the Fiscal Year 2017 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill, we urge you to include robust and necessary funding for volunteer income tax assistance programs, including \$30 million for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) matching grants and \$8 million for Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE).

VITA and TCE help low- and moderate-income individuals and families in all 50 states and the District of Columbia comply with their tax obligations and maximize their returns and savings. Many VITA and TCE sites focus on specific underserved groups, including individuals with disabilities, rural taxpayers, individuals with limited English language proficiency, and seniors. During the 2014 tax filing season, VITA and TCE programs prepared 3.2 million returns and helped return \$3.9 billion to working families, with refunds going directly into the local economies where these families live and work.

Despite continued federal investment, there remains a significant gap between the demand for VITA and TCE grants and available funding. Continued federal support for these tax assistance programs will:

- Provide free tax preparation services to those in need;
- Increase working families' understanding and claims of existing tax credits;
- Improve tax compliance by modest income households; and
- Expand the use of e-filing, thereby significantly reducing the IRS costs associated with processing paper returns.

Right now, over 93,000 VITA and TCE volunteers at 12,000 sites nationwide are helping individuals and families file their taxes. These volunteers ensure taxpayers are able to claim the tax credits they have earned, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and education tax credits. The benefits for taxpayers are clear.

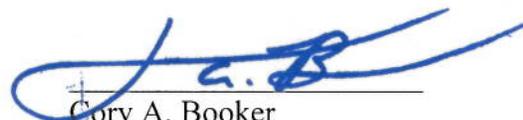
In addition, we should ensure adequate funding for the effective implementation of EITC and the refundable Child Tax Credit program integrity provisions enacted in the PATH Act, which Senate Finance Chairman Orin Hatch referred to as "the most robust improvements to address waste, fraud, and abuse in the tax code in nearly 20 years."

A well-funded VITA program would give low-income Americans access to a vital service that can help them achieve economic security. We appreciate your past support of this program and respectfully urge you to include \$30 million in funding for VITA matching grants and \$8 million for TCE in the FY 2017 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



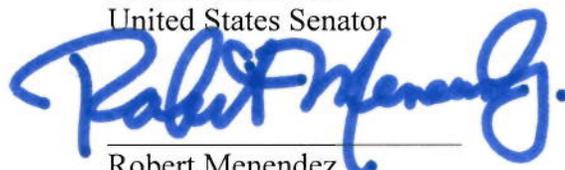
Mazie K. Hirono  
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Richard J. Durbin  
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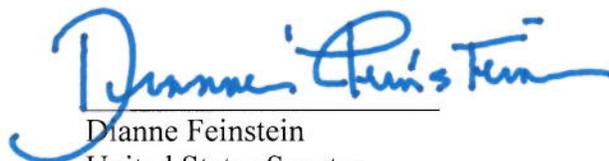
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Al Franken  
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United States Senator



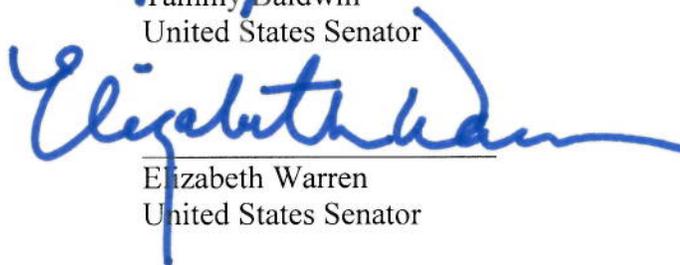
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Tammy Baldwin  
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Benjamin L. Cardin  
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Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow  
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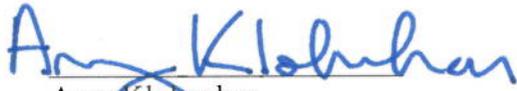
Ron Wyden  
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Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



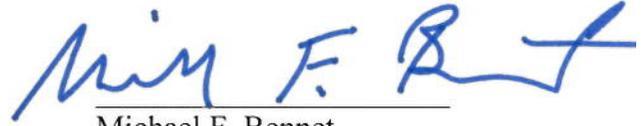
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United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
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