

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tax Prep Chicago Encourages Residents to Take Advantage of Free Income Tax Assistance

Helping Chicagoans get millions of dollars in income tax refunds

Chicago –Tax Prep Chicago is marking Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day and the official start of tax season by reminding residents to take advantage of the City of Chicago’s free tax assistance program. The City will partner with the Center for Economic Progress, Ladder Up, the City’s Treasurer’s Office and volunteers to once again provide this free service to eligible residents. Last year, Tax Prep Chicago helped over 20,000 families and individuals receive nearly \$30 million in tax refunds and credits.

“Mayor Rahm Emanuel is committed to ensuring that hardworking Chicagoans can access free tax services to file their returns and claim the refunds they deserve,” said Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. “EITC is what it is today because of the Mayor’s work to expand the credit in 1993, which has been shown to be one of the most successful tools we have in reducing poverty. And we will continue working to provide these types of services to residents and families throughout our City.”

From January 27 through April 17, families earning up to \$55,000 or individuals earning up to \$30,000 can visit one of 18 sites across Chicago to receive free and confidential income tax assistance. Seniors at any income level also have the option of visiting an additional 15 sites run by AARP.

“The EITC program has a proven record of uplifting people and communities across the country and across our City. I am proud to partner with these organizations that are strengthening the outreach of these free resources to make them more accessible across the City of Chicago for its residents,” said City Treasurer Kurt Summers. “We need to be investing more in EITC resources because it helps working families here in Chicago with additional money to support their local neighborhood economy.”

Volunteer tax preparers, certified through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), will assist residents with federal and state income tax returns for the 2017 tax year and can, in many cases, help with prior-year returns and amendments. Volunteers will also help taxpayers filing for or renewing an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

"Our community volunteers help you get EITC and any other credits you're due to help you get the best refund possible. Our goal is to help you get it and get it right. This is money you can save or use to pay off bills, buy that car to get to work or make a down payment on a home. Let us help make your life a little easier," said Jennifer Lambert, Tax Assistance Program Manager at Ladder Up.

In 2017, 963,000 Illinoisan workers received more than \$2.4 billion in EITC refunds.

This year, IRS is also promoting other refundable tax credits including the American Opportunity Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit and the Additional Child Tax Credit. Eligible individuals and families with children could receive over \$6,300 from the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits alone, not including other valuable credits.

"We want to make sure every Chicagoan has the resources they need to get the tax credits they have earned," said David Marzahl, CEO of the Center for Economic Progress. "Everyone deserves to have a trusted tax provider and we have a number of new services to meet people where they are."

Taxpayers who qualify for the EITC and/or the Additional Child Tax Credit will receive refunds after February 15, so residents are encouraged to file early.

Residents are also urged to be cautious of predatory lenders and stick with people they trust. The deadline for filing taxes is April 17, 2018.

For more information about how to access free tax assistance or for a complete list of EITC locations:

- Visit the City's tax assistance website at www.TaxPrepChicago.org
- Call the City's 311 helpline
- Visit the Center for Economic Progress at www.economicprogress.org or call (312) 252-0280
- Visit Ladder Up at www.goladderup.org or call (312) 409-4719
- Visit the IRS at www.irs.gov and type "free tax help" in the search box or call (800) 829-1040 / (800) 829-4059 (TDD)

For more information on ITIN support, taxpayers can visit <http://taxprepchicago.org/news.html>.

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