



May 18, 2021

**Testimony of Julia Brown, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, In Support of LD 1561,
An Act To Support Working Families through Outreach and Education about Tax Credits for Persons of
Low Income**

Good afternoon, Senator Chipman, Representative Terry, and distinguished members of the Committee on Taxation. Thank you for the opportunity to write in support of LD 1651.

My name is Julia Brown, and I am the Advocacy and Outreach Director at the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP). ILAP is Maine's only statewide nonprofit provider of immigration law and related legal aid to Maine's low-income residents. Each year, ILAP serves over 3,000 individuals statewide, coming from approximately 100 countries around the world. On behalf of ILAP, I ask the Committee to support LD 1651, otherwise known as An Act To Support Working Families through Outreach and Education about Tax Credits for Persons of Low Income.

LD 1651 would expand the Maine Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to all tax filers with eligible incomes, regardless of immigration status. The EITC is a powerful tool that not only provides income supports but has also been linked to improved health and educational outcomes for families. Unfortunately, the EITC is currently conditioned on the recipients having filed taxes with Social Security Numbers (SSNs), which excludes immigrants who are ineligible for SSNs and must file with an Income Tax Identification Number (ITIN). Nearly 300 Mainers cannot receive the EITC because their taxes are filed with an ITIN.¹ This includes mixed status households, where even if just one member of the family files with an ITIN, the entire family is excluded from the EITC.

Many Maine workers who must file with an ITIN are essential workers who have kept Maine running during the COVID-19 pandemic. These families have also been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Maine must expand access to life-changing support offered by tax credits like the EITC to everyone, regardless of immigration status.

Maine would not be the first state to extend their state EITC to tax filers who use an ITIN. California, Colorado, Maryland, and New Mexico have all done so, and Washington created a new credit for ITIN filers that mirrors the state EITC.²

We urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1651 as an important step toward making our tax code more equitable.

¹ *Analysis: How the HEROES Act Would Reach ITIN Filers.* (May 14, 2020). Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy <https://itep.org/analysis-how-the-heroes-act-would-reach-itin-filers/>

² Baxandall, P. *Ending the Tax Penalty Against Working Immigrants: MA Should Follow Other States Extending EITC to Immigrant Tax Filers.* (May 17, 2021). Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center. <https://massbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ITIN-EITC-May-2021.pdf>