



Tax Fairness Advocacy Toolkit

Sample Letter to Your Legislator

[Date]
[Your Address]

The Honorable [Legislator First and Last Name]
[Legislator Address]

Dear [Senator/Representative Last Name]:

We are writing to ask your support for the needs of children, families and communities—specifically by raising adequate revenue and improving tax fairness through this year’s state budget.

Increasing the state income tax is the fairest and most effective way to raise adequate new revenue. Income tax revenues are Illinois’ largest and most powerful revenue source, and the income tax has not been raised in 20 years. The state cannot cut its way out of a \$12 billion deficit, and a carefully crafted income tax increase is essential to putting Illinois’ fiscal house in order.

Improving tax fairness must be a part of any tax reform package in Illinois. As an overall percentage of their earnings, struggling families often pay twice as much as wealthier households do on state and local taxes combined. In fact, national tax experts have called ours one of the most regressive revenue systems in the country.

These pressures could grow still greater, if taxes are increased without proper attention to fairness. That’s why we should strengthen the Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit, a proven tool for lifting families out of poverty. The EITC provides low-income working families with a well-deserved break on their taxes. This credit is currently worth a maximum of about \$240 per qualifying household in Illinois.

Yet ours is the second-smallest EITC in the nation; other states’ credits are worth up to eight times more. We should grow the Illinois EITC to 20 percent of the federal credit to provide families with more of the help they need and to protect them from shouldering even more tax responsibility. Combining an EITC increase with some level of growth in the personal exemption would be an effective, feasible method for increasing tax fairness.

We urge you and your colleagues to seize this unique opportunity for progress in the face of enormous challenges.

Sincerely,

[Your Name or your Group’s Name]