



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 6, 2016

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL, TREASURER SUMMERS TO NEARLY DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF FREE TAX PREPARATION ASSISTANCE LOCATIONS

Number of free tax preparation locations will increase from 21 to 36; 16th annual Tax Prep Chicago to assist residents in accessing millions in income tax refunds

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and City of Chicago Treasurer Kurt Summers today announced the expansion of [Tax Prep Chicago](#), the 16th annual citywide free tax preparation assistance program. Due to an expanded relationship between the City of Chicago, [Center for Economic Progress, Ladder Up](#), and [AARP Foundation Tax-Aide](#), the number of free tax preparation assistance sites will nearly double – from 21 to 36 sites. Last year, Tax Prep Chicago helped nearly 21,000 families and individuals receive over \$34 million in tax refunds and credits.

It has been estimated that each year nearly approximately 100,000—or 25 percent of eligible families in Chicago—do not take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), leaving over \$230 million in unclaimed refunds. These additional sites will help to ensure that taxpayers in Chicago have access to the information and resources they need to take advantage of these critical funds, which have been known to keep numerous families and individuals from falling into poverty.

“The EITC is the single most important tool we have to encourage work and reduce poverty in our country; however, far too many families either don’t know that they are eligible or need help applying for it,” said Mayor Emanuel. “This effort will provide some needed assistance to families whose incomes are already stretched to the limit, while also sustaining local businesses and fueling our economy at the same time.”

Families earning up to \$50,000 or individuals earning up to \$25,000 are eligible to take advantage of the City’s free and confidential income tax assistance at 36 locations across Chicago. To ensure more Chicagoans have access to assistance, Treasurer Summers has fostered a relationship with AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, providing seniors with dedicated locations for any help they may need on their taxes.

“This expanded program has the potential to save Chicagoans millions of dollars, leading to greater investment in our neighborhoods and in our local economy,” said Treasurer Summers. “Chicago’s seniors shouldn’t have to worry about the uncertainty that comes along with tax preparation. AARP Foundation Tax-Aide specializes in helping people and we are proud of this new partnership that will give many Chicagoans financial peace of mind without emptying their pocketbooks.”

Volunteer tax preparers, certified through an IRS-approved training program, assist residents with federal and state income tax returns for the 2015 tax year and in many cases, assistance with prior-year returns and amendments is available. Sites are open to residents who need assistance between late January and mid-April 2016.

"For nearly 50 years, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide has provided free tax assistance to millions of low- and moderate-income taxpayers," said AARP Illinois State Director Bob Gallo. "Our hard working IRS-certified volunteers offer an easy-to-use tax service for those Chicagoans who need it the most."

This year, eligible individuals and families with children could receive up to \$6,866 from the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits alone, not including other valuable credits. But many eligible Chicagoans may not claim all the income tax credits they deserve without the help of knowledgeable preparers.

"We want to make sure every Chicagoan has the resources they need to get the tax credits they have earned," said David Marzahl from the Center for Economic Progress. "Regardless of income, everyone deserves to have a trusted tax provider."

"After 20 years of running a city-wide tax program, we have helped thousands of Chicago residents secure the refunds they've worked for," said Christine Cheng from Ladder Up.

The EITC is the nation's largest and most successful anti-poverty program. The EITC provides critical funds for working families and individuals, particularly families with children and each year, it lifts more than 6 million families out of poverty.

"We know the great value of this program that supports families and communities, which is why we are excited to expand services and reach more residents this year," said Chicago Department of Family and Support Services Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler. "The City's partnerships with key organizations have enabled many of our residents to do more with a tight budget, providing many of our families with opportunities that otherwise wouldn't exist."

To protect consumers who choose to have their returns performed by a commercial tax preparation service as opposed to a non-profit tax preparation site, the city mandates that commercial tax preparers inform taxpayers of their rights and disclose any hidden fees and hard to find fine print during tax preparation. The City's Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) requires businesses to employ easy-to-understand disclosure forms that clearly lay out all costs before the return is prepared. The Consumer Bill of Rights Regarding Tax Preparation Services, and an informational flier called "Know Before You Hire a Tax Preparer" are both available in English and Spanish on BACP's [website](#).

For more information about how to access free tax assistance, Chicagoans can:

- Call the City's 311 helpline
- Find their closest tax prep location by visiting the City's tax assistance website at www.TaxPrepChicago.org
- 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 www.aarp.org/findtaxhelp or call 1-888-AARPNOW (1-888-227-7669)
- 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)
- Follow along on Twitter with the hashtag #TaxPrepChicago

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About AARP Foundation

AARP Foundation is working to win back opportunity for struggling Americans 50+ by being a force for change on the most serious issues they face today: housing, hunger, income and isolation. By coordinating responses to these issues on all four fronts at once, and supporting them with vigorous legal advocacy, the Foundation serves the unique needs of those 50+ while working with local organizations nationwide to reach more people and make resources go further. AARP Foundation is a charitable affiliate of AARP. Learn more at www.aarpfoundation.org.

About the Center for Economic Progress

For 25 years, CEP has been on the forefront of turning tax time into an opportunity for low-income workers and their families to get ahead. Since 1990, CEP has served more than 370,000 hard-working, low-income families and individuals in Illinois, returning over \$560 million and counting in tax refunds to clients. During the 2015 tax season, CEP put over \$30 million back into the pockets of over 17,000 Illinois families, including over \$13 million in the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC). For more information, visit www.economicprogress.org.

About Ladder Up:

Ladder Up is a Chicago-based nonprofit organization committed to helping hardworking families and individuals access the financial resources they need to move up the economic ladder. The organization offers free programs to help Chicagoland clients prepare their tax returns, learn about and apply for financial aid for college, and develop a foundation for sound financial decision making. Since 1994, Ladder Up has served more than 263,000 clients and helped them secure over \$476 million in financial benefits. For more information, visit www.goladderup.org.