

Roberto Melara, Capital Area Food Bank
HB 992 - Income Tax - Earned Income Tax Credit - Alteration and Sunset Repeal
House Ways and Means Committee
3/2/2022
Testimony – SUPPORT
(2 minutes)

Good afternoon Chair Atterbeary and members of the committee,

My name is Roberto Melara. I am the Maryland Regional Director at the Capital Area Food Bank. The food bank serves over 200,000 food insecure residents in the two largest counties in Maryland, Prince George's and Montgomery. Last year, we distributed over 30 million meals to Maryland clients.

Unfortunately, we know that many of the clients we serve are living in or near poverty. We also know that many of our clients are hardworking, low-income residents who simply aren't making enough to support themselves and their families, so they turn to the food bank for additional support.

These clients are often eligible to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit, one of the most effective anti-poverty tools in U.S. history. This credit has proven and positive impacts on educational success, housing stability, health access, workforce development, and food security – with a significant benefit to women and communities of color. The state of Maryland is one of 28 states that offers an additional state credit, on top of the federal credit, to help low-income workers escape poverty and stay engaged in the workforce.

However, the state's tax credit is about to become inaccessible to ITIN filers – filers who can't obtain a social security number – which will have detrimental impacts to immigrant communities, mixed-status households, and undocumented individuals. The food bank serves an exceptionally high number of immigrant households, for reasons just like this – the barring of access to government programs that our clients need and deserve. House bill 992 would ensure these artificial barriers aren't created, and that ITIN filers maintain their eligibility to receive the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Strengthening and expanding the Earned Income Tax Credits can help **all** low-income Marylanders access the food and necessities they need today for brighter futures tomorrow. Therefore, we encourage a favorable report on House Bill 992. Thank you.