

Testimony Before the Finance Committee
Submitted by Gladys Nunez, Data Analyst at Optimus Health Care, Inc.
& Bridgeport VITA Volunteer
Re: Support of a State Earned Income Tax Credit, S.B. 1007
March 7, 2011

I write in support of a State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). I've been a volunteer tax preparer for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program in Bridgeport for the past thirteen (13) years. Every year, I prepare tax returns for over 600 individuals and families from the Bridgeport area. Through this experience, I have seen first-hand how the federal EITC has helped many low-to-moderate-income working individuals. I would like to share one of their stories with you today.

I was preparing taxes at a non-profit organization that provided many other services for the community. A young woman came into my office with her four-year-old son. This woman was very sad. She asked me what types of services the Agency provided, and I began to tell her about each service. As I was organizing her paperwork to start her return, she began telling me that she had recently been laid off from her job, she was about to become homeless and her car was not working. I gave her the phone numbers of all the programs that could assist her. I then finished her return and told her that she qualified for the EITC (since she had been employed until recently), and told her what her refund amount would be. Suddenly, I saw the woman slide down from the chair onto her knees; her face filled with tears, and she raised her arms and began thanking God. Her son looked at her as she cried and said, "Mommy, why did the lady make you cry?" She looked at her son and said, "Baby, these are not tears of sadness, but tears of joy. We will now be alright, son." The woman stood up and embraced me and thanked me. After receiving her refund, she later returned to my office and told me that she had paid her back rent, had been able to fix her car, and, because she now had transportation, she had also been able to find a new job.

This story will live with me for the rest of my life. This is why I continue to provide free tax preparation services to the Bridgeport community through VITA. I, Gladys Nunez, urge the Finance Committee to support and pass a State Earned Income Tax Credit so that other struggling families can get the extra support they need to make ends meet and move towards financial stability.