

5/6/2021

The Honorable Mary Kiffmeyer  
Chair, Senate State Government Finance and Policy and Elections Committee  
95 University Avenue W.  
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3103  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Michael Nelson  
Chair, House State Government Finance and Elections Committee  
585 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Kiffmeyer, Chair Nelson, and Conferees,

On behalf of Prepare + Prosper, I'm writing to respectfully urge you to include the Governor's full budget proposal to support Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites in the State Government Finance Conference Report. This proposal provides \$1 million in funding for the Taxpayer Assistance Grants (TAG) program, which supports free tax preparation services for low-income taxpayers, and \$100,000 for the Department of Revenue to offer technical assistance to expand the program and start new sites.

Trained and IRS-certified volunteers prepare tax returns for low-income members of their community at VITA sites across the state. VITA services save the state money by ensuring that returns are prepared accurately and filed electronically, and they make sure taxpayers claim any tax credits for which they're eligible, which helps people catch up on bills and save for an emergencies. To date Prepare + Prosper has prepared over 14,000 returns and over \$14 million in refunds back to the communities we serve. This is a true neighbors-serving-neighbors model that creates a great deal of good for a small amount of funding.

**Unfortunately, our VITA sites often have to turn away eligible clients due to limited resources, and in parts of our service area, there are no free tax prep services nearby.** The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated our existing limitations, as we have lost volunteers and had to shift to virtual services.

**Additional funding would enable us to expand our service hours and locations, and to recruit and train more volunteers, so we can meet the need for free tax prep in their community.** We hope you will prioritize this funding in the State Government Finance Conference Report.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alejandro Valenzuela Jr.  
Tax + Financial Services Director

CC:

The Honorable Tou Xiong  
The Honorable Sandra Masin  
The Honorable Emma Greenman  
The Honorable Jim Nash  
The Honorable Andrew R. Lang  
The Honorable Mark W. Koran  
The Honorable Jeff R. Howe  
The Honorable Jim Carlson