

5/6/21

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 United Community Action Partnership, I'm writing to emphasize the importance of 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.

In UCAP's service area, the closest VITA site can be an hour or more away from the community in which the taxpayer lives. 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, allowing us to bring our tax services to low income taxpayers in our most rural communities. We would be able to be appropriately staffed, support a travel budget to get to those most rural communities, and have the equipment necessary to provide VITA services. We would also be able to expand our volunteer recruitment and training efforts with a focus on recruiting bilingual volunteers. This is a vital activity that would allow us to provide services to taxpayers for whom English is not their first language and would encourage those ESL taxpayers to use these services.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Jensen
Family Services Manager/Tax Program Manager

United Community Action Partnership

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