

NCJ 

California  
**POLICY  
ADVOCACY**  
Network



Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair  
Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review  
1303 Tenth Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Senator Mitchell,

As members of the California Interfaith Coalition, we ask you to include all immigrant tax filers in the State's COVID-19 economic relief. Governor Newsom's recent establishment of a public-private partnership to provide disaster relief to undocumented workers was a great step towards a fully inclusive relief plan. However, we know that more assistance is urgently needed. The dignity of all human beings is a cornerstone of our faith traditions and compels us to seek greater and more permanent solutions for undocumented Californians.

The California Interfaith Coalition came together with the belief that addressing poverty in California was not just an ethical issue, but a moral imperative for all of us. Our members are faith-based advocacy organizations, including the California Catholic Conference; the National Council of Jewish Women California; the Friends Committee on Legislation of California; the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California; the Council on American-Islamic Relations; the Lutheran Office of Public Policy – California; GRACE Institute; and California Church IMPACT.

One group of Californians will be the hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis: undocumented immigrants. To date, undocumented workers impacted by the COVID-19 crisis have been almost entirely left out of state and federal aid packages. And yet, more than two million undocumented immigrants make California their home. Over seventy percent (70%) of undocumented Californians have resided in the U.S. for more than ten years. They contribute over 3.2 billion dollars in state and local taxes each year and represent 1 in 10 workers.<sup>1</sup> These workers are often immigrants working in the lowest paid, most strenuous jobs, such as farmworkers, cleaners, and healthcare workers.

Remote work from home is simply not an option for the majority of California's undocumented workers. Due to the *Shelter in Place* order, these workers are losing their jobs or having their hours drastically curtailed. Moreover, even though these workers pay taxes and contribute to the state's prosperity, undocumented workers are unable to access vital benefits such as unemployment insurance. The inability to earn a living will have a devastating impact on undocumented immigrants. Already, undocumented immigrants are living precariously - over half live at or below 150% of the poverty level.

We urge the Governor and the California State Legislature to meet these basic needs of workers through access to benefit programs, regardless of citizenship or immigration status, and immediately take the following actions:

1. **Extend tax credits to undocumented workers** by broadening eligibility for the California Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), including the Young Child Tax Credit (YCTC), to include ITIN filers, and immediately making it retroactive to tax year 2019. This will provide critical supplemental income to undocumented residents and to their children, many of whom are US citizens.
2. **Provide cash benefits to undocumented immigrants** to pay for groceries, rent/mortgage, emergency home repairs, transportation, medicines, and tools by allocating \$10 million to geographically diverse Community Based Organizations.
3. **Create and fund a 'Disaster Relief Fund'** within the Employment Development Department (EDD) to offer parity in unemployment payments to undocumented workers and who are unable to work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We need the State of California to provide on-going income replacement to undocumented workers who have lost work or hours as a result of this crisis, on par with what other workers are receiving.

---

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Taxation and Economic Policy.  
<https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-tax-contributions-in-california-county-by-county-analysis/>

4. **Commit to establish a permanent income replacement** program within the EDD for individuals who do not otherwise qualify for unemployment benefits, but who are unemployed through no fault of their own. This fund would be administered separately from Unemployment Insurance, but using the same criteria for determining the duration, amount, and timing of benefits.

Our faith traditions teach us to be inclusive and to treat those outside of our home with *greater* honor than those closest to us. We urge you to support our immigrant neighbors in this time of need by including them in all COVID-19 relief efforts. In the midst of the sharpest recession of this generation, we must lift up those who are most economically vulnerable.

Let us not stand by in blind ignorance or in lament without action. We, the people, can and must prioritize those on whom our economy stands. We thank you for your leadership toward this vision of a California for all people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RQB', with a small dot at the end.

Regina Q. Banks

Director, Lutheran Office of Public Policy - California, on behalf of the California Interfaith Coalition

CC:

Governor Gavin Newsom

Senate Pro tempore Toni Atkins

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon

Assemblymember Phil Ting