



Public Testimony
Senate Finance Committee
Re: RI Earned Income Tax Credit and Minimum Wage
Senate Bill 2156
March 8, 2016

Submitted by The Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty

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Good afternoon. My name is Emily Jones and I'm speaking on behalf of the Rhode Island Interfaith Coalition to Reduce Poverty, a coalition of diverse religious communities and advocacy partners throughout the state who have come together to fight poverty.

I am testifying today to voice our organization's strong support for S2156 which would increase the Rhode Island Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to twenty per cent of the federal credit.

We testified earlier today on the reasons why we support an increase to the RI EITC when discussing the Governor's budget proposal. In the interest of time, I will not reiterate that testimony. I will, however, highlight the most crucial statistic, from our perspective: 14.3 per cent of Rhode Islanders are living on incomes at or below the federal poverty threshold. Many more are teetering on the edge of poverty. As people of faith, this is simply unacceptable to us.

By strengthening the RI Earned Income Tax Credit, we strengthen working families and our local economy. A 20% increase will have a stronger impact on individual families, neighborhoods and our state's economy.

As families struggle to make ends meet, there is a meaningful difference between 12.5%, 15% and 20%. Each additional percentage point written into law has an impact. To put it in concrete terms, that percentage point buys a couple more boxes of diapers, helps stock up on groceries for a good part of an extra week, or replaces a tire on a struggling car. It matters.

As you consider the proposals before you, we urge you to increase the Rhode Island Earned Income Tax Credit to at least twenty per cent of the federal credit.

Thank you for your time and for your public service.