

Testimony for Public Hearing
House Roads and Economic Development Committee
June 2, 2015

The Rev. Nicolette L. Siragusa
1274 Burlington Dr.
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

Re: HB 4609

Thank you, Chairman Farrington and members of the committee. My name is Rev. Nicolette Siragusa, I pastor First Congregational United Church of Christ, Grand Ledge, and I strongly oppose HB 4609 which would eliminate the Michigan Earned Income Tax Credit.

As a local church pastor, I am familiar with the difficult task of budgeting. While I rely on gifts and pledges, you shape and shift revenue streams, and yet there still never seems to be enough money. The task in such a moment is to look at our values, and use those values to evaluate the ways we take in money and prioritize how we spend it.

In Michigan, we value educating and raising our children so they become responsible and productive adults. We value hard work, and believe it should be compensated fairly. The Earned Income Tax Credit enriches lives and reflects our values and ethical standards by helping the working poor. It encourages those who value the opportunity to work, even when they are paid little, and who persist in their labors, even when they struggle to make ends meet. It directly fulfills the proverb, "manual labor has its reward" (Proverbs 12:14).

In our church, we evaluate resources and expenses, but we no longer talk about spending money. Instead, we discern how to invest our resources in ways that produce the maximum good. I urge you to do the same.

The Earned Income Tax Credit invests in our working families, the bedrocks of our communities. It encourages hard work and protects families who are on the brink of poverty. It helps them achieve financial stability as they pay off high winter heating bills and avoid service shut-offs. It increases quality of life and supports our local economies as families replace old and unusable appliances with more energy efficient ones. It is used to pay for childcare, for car maintenance, for uniforms, and for other expenses that make going to work possible.

In contrast, eliminating the Earned Income Tax Credit would shift the tax burden onto our most vulnerable families, families that are one broken axle, bout of pneumonia, burst pipe, or other unforeseen emergency away from falling into poverty and requiring welfare. Churches are doing what we can, banding together to support the poor in our communities, however the needs we see already exceed our ability to meet them. Shifting an additional tax burden onto poor and struggling families will only increase those needs.

Ideally, you would restore the Earned Income Tax Credit to pre-2012 levels. At the very least, I urge you practice good stewardship, protect families, keep children out of poverty, and invest in the future of our state by retaining the EITC and opposing HB 4609. Thank you.