Housing Assistance through a Renters’ Credit

**Engage:** We have an affordable housing crisis. According to Harvard researchers, since 1960 renters’ median earnings have gone up 5 percent while cost of rent went up 61 percent.

**Problem:** We subsidize housing via our tax code by giving tax incentives to wealthier homeowners, while renters are ignored, and wealth inequality and the racial wealth divide get worse. In addition, only one in four of those eligible for housing assistance gets it.

**Illustrate or Inform:** A renters’ tax credit could help address the affordable housing crisis by capping the out-of-pocket rent and utilities expenses a low-income household would pay at around 30 percent of their income. The credit would cover any excess above that up to 100 percent of the community’s “Fair Market Rent.” There have been bipartisan proposals to create a renters’ credit such as H.R. 2169 and S. 1106 (as well as S. 3590, H.R. 7050 and S. 3342 in the last Congress), and researchers at Columbia University estimate that a renters’ credit could lift over 9 million Americans above the poverty line.

**Call to Action:** In addition to supporting efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing, will you support a renters’ credit and voice support for it with House/Senate leaders?

Housing Stability and Racial Wealth Inequality

**Engage** *:* I’d like to talk about racial wealth inequality. The median wealth for white families is 8-10 times greater than the median wealth for Hispanic or African American families.

**Problem:** Housing and wealth are inextricably entwined. With low-income families, particularly families of color, spending most of their income on rent, they are perpetually trying to stay afloat and thus unable to move up the economic ladder.

**Illustrate or Inform:** Access to safe, stable housing is critical, and impacts many parts of our lives including education, health, and nutrition. When households are forced to pay high housing costs, their spending on other necessities, like food, transportation, and health care are cut. [*If you have a story, share it here*].

**Call to Action:** RESULTS urges you to address our affordable housing crisis and close the racial wealth I specifically urge you to:

* Support the creation of a “renters’ tax credit” to help low-income families cover the cost of rising rent
* Increase the supply of affordable housing via the National Housing Trust Fund.
* Address other barriers to affordable housing and racial equity issues including restrictive zoning, credit scores, and application fees.
* Target homeownership policies for first-time homebuyers impacted by segregation and redlining to reduce racial wealth inequality.
* Pass bipartisan bills to create an Affordable Housing Task Force to study the scope of the affordable housing crisis and recommend solutions.

Prioritize Tax Policies That Focus on Working Families

**Engage:**Tax policy can create economic opportunity and mobility – the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) lift more families and children out of poverty than any other program.

**Problem:** Unfortunately, the current federal tax code taxes more than 5 million low-wage workers not raising children at home into (or deeper into) poverty, and one in three children in low-income families do not receive the full Child Tax Credit.

**Illustrate or Inform:** Over the last several decades, gains in income and wealth have primarily gone to those at the top, while economic growth has slowed and inequality has increased**.** We should restructure current tax policies to reduce inequality and help families make ends meet by expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit for low-income families *[include your own EITC or CTC experience and/or why you care].* The Working Families Tax Relief Act (S. 1138/H.R.3157) is an exciting proposal to expand both the EITC and CTC, which would help 114 million people and reduce child poverty by 28 percent.

**House Call to Action:** Will you prioritize working families by cosponsoring the robust EITC and CTC expansions in H.R.3157?

**Senate Call to Action:** Congress is considering legislation to extend a collection of mainly business tax breaks. House leaders want expansions of the EITC and CTC included in any business “tax extenders” bill. Will you tell Senate leaders to adhere to the 2015 precedent that no business tax breaks should be extended or expanded without also helping low-income workers and families through expansions of the EITC and CTC?