Note From Our Founder

Joe Sanberg, Founder, Golden State Opportunity

When I launched Golden State Opportunity (GSO) four years ago, I could hardly have imagined how this organization would grow or the impact it would have.

What I did know was that, after a major advocacy push — alongside a broad grassroots coalition — we were able to pass legislation creating the California Earned Income Tax Credit (Cal EITC). While that was a thrilling victory for working people, the state didn’t allocate nearly enough money to raise awareness of this valuable credit.

I chose to create GSO and our CalEITC4Me campaign to step into that breach, in order to help ensure money allocated for low-income workers found its way into their pockets. Now, four years later, the number of households receiving the Cal EITC has increased five fold to more than 2 million!

At the same time, GSO’s scope has broadened as we look to apply our cutting-edge outreach and education tactics to increase the use of other public benefits, most notably a pilot in Los Angeles County to boost participation in CalFresh food assistance.

I’ve made it my mission to end poverty and bring financial security for all, and while we celebrate our victories to this point, California and our nation face strong headwinds from ever increasing wealth inequality and the looming prospect of another recession.

These realities only strengthen our resolve at GSO to continue this important work. We look forward to your partnership as we continue onward! Thank you.

Golden State Opportunity strives to improve the lives of working Californians.

In the News

Josh Fryday: Cal EITC expansion is bigger than $1 billion and it’s going to save lives

Still Time to Get Your California Earned Income Tax Credit

La campaña Crédito Tributario busca traer seguridad financiera a más familias

Malia M. Cohen
Chair of the California State Board of Equalization and member of the Franchise Tax Board

California, as the 5th largest economy in the world, should not have one quarter of our young children living in poverty. Fortunately, California’s recent expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit will reach millions of new workers and give families with young children a financial boost to help make ends meet. It’s imperative people who qualify for the credit know about it and claim it. Franchise Tax Board's outreach efforts through partners like CalEITC4Me aim to educate qualified taxpayers about this cash-back tax credit that puts money back into their pocket.”
Statewide Data: Cal EITC claims on the rise!

More than two million low-income workers have claimed close to $381 million through California’s Earned Income Tax Credit during the 2019 tax season. That’s a 40% increase in claims over all of last year. Those numbers will continue to rise as we push forward with our year-round outreach campaign. Over 1.1 million individuals who have claimed the Cal EITC in 2018 had at least one dependent, equaling 74% of filers.

Expansion & Young Child Tax Credit

Thanks to Gov. Gavin Newsom and the Legislature, next year the Cal EITC will be a $1 billion program — more than double its current size. That’s a major win for low-wage workers across the state, especially parents of young children who will be eligible for an additional $1,000 credit. The Cal EITC expansion will also increase income eligibility to anyone making $30,000 or less, the equivalent of full-time work at $15 an hour. All told, the expansion is expected to make this important credit available to an estimated three million California households, representing seven million people, and as many as one million children.

My Public Benefits

This summer, GSO launched a pilot campaign in the Los Angeles area that connected Californians with programs and services that can improve their lives through a new website, MyPublicBenefits.org.

In 2020, our public benefits outreach will have special focus on increasing CalFresh enrollment in Los Angeles County. Statewide, roughly four million people receive CalFresh food assistance, which accounts for only 70% of those who are eligible. That’s well below the national average of 83% enrollment in food assistance. In Los Angeles County, with roughly two million people enrolled in CalFresh, the participation rate is just 68%.

In addition to our digital outreach efforts, we’re working with our grassroots partners to host CalFresh enrollment events in targeted zip codes within Los Angeles County, so that eligible residents can get the help they need.
In October, we convened more than 40 Los Angeles County nonprofit organizations, foundations, municipal agencies and for-profit allies to examine how, together, we could expand the use of public benefits and tax credits by low-income households, especially those led by women.

More than one million Los Angeles County women are the breadwinners for their households. County figures show their families are more likely to live in poverty. At the 2nd Annual Women’s Economic Empowerment Summit, we explored strategies and tactics to change that narrative, and help to lift up working women.

Close to 30% of women in the county who live in poverty are employed, and the poverty rate for women here is higher than the statewide and national averages. At the same time, we know that public benefits and tax credits, like the Earned Income Tax Credit, can help women advance in their careers, support their families and reach financial stability. But far too many are unaware of these services or lack the bandwidth to enroll. By working together, we can do more to ensure they have the information and support they need to leverage the resources that already exist to help them thrive.

**Events: Back-to-School**

We know that families with school-aged children highly benefit from the EITC, with close to 8 in 10 Cal EITC dollars going to families with children. Families use the EITC to buy school supplies, shoes, and to cover basic needs for their children. So it’s only fitting that our outreach be conducted in partnership with schools — a trusted messenger for parents across the state.

Our backpack giveaways are the perfect opportunity to help parents prepare for the school year, while also reminding those that have yet to file a tax return that they can claim a Cal EITC refund. That cash can help pay for school supplies or new clothes.

This year, we hosted more than a dozen events with school districts and other partners across Los Angeles County and the Inland Empire.
The 2020 Census

The work being done for the 2020 Census is extremely critical to ensuring that every Californian receives the care and services that they need. The results of the 2020 Census will directly impact our state’s most vulnerable individuals for the next 10 years, as the population count designates the amount of funding the government puts into public benefit programs in each county across the state. In order to provide proper access to housing, medical, and other services to low-income individuals, we need an accurate count. Without that accurate count, California won’t receive the resources it needs to reduce poverty and increase equality. At GSO, we’ll be partnering with organizations throughout the state, including the United Way and the East Bay Community Foundation, to provide our extensive experience running a multi-layered outreach and education campaign using sophisticated targeting strategies to reach those “Hard to Count” (HTC) populations. Stay tuned for updates on our 2020 Census involvement!

Year-Round Outreach

Even though April 15 has passed, it’s not too late to file. Eligible recipients can still claim the credit throughout the year!

This is why Golden State Opportunity’s year-round organizing model focuses on increasing our outreach, education, and advocacy efforts post-Tax Day so we can reach the maximum number of families and individuals who are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Advocacy Efforts

During this year’s legislative session, we were a leading partner in a broad coalition of nonprofit, labor, faith-based and small business groups, among others, who partnered effectively with Gov. Gavin Newsom and lawmakers to pass the historic expansion of the Cal EITC. That coalition, which dubbed itself Close Loopholes Open Opportunities or CLOO, was able to effectively message to the public and lawmakers why Newsom’s plan to conform to certain aspects of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Acts, which primarily benefited corporations, was a sensible way to give low-income works a massive raise.

This coming year, we will be exploring a number of ways to further expand and improve the Cal EITC, such as including homecare and domestic workers, workers who file their taxes with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), as well as ways to make it easier for people to file and claim the credit.

We are Hiring!

To find out about our job opportunities, please visit: www.goldenstateopportunity.org/careers/

Interested in monthly updates or want to receive outreach trainings?

Please visit www.caleitc4me.org/be-our-partner/ Learn how to join our webinars, receive the latest news, find events near you, or sign up your organization to receive trainings on Cal EITC outreach strategies.