



**Testimony in support of S.2659/ HD.5036
An Act to Provide Equal Stimulus Checks to Immigrant Taxpayers
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Revenue
By Jennifer Muroff, LWVMA Immigration Specialist
May 19, 2020**

Maria, of Framingham, shared her story during Virtual Immigrants' Day at the State House on May 7. Maria has paid state and federal taxes for eighteen years. Eight months pregnant and laid off from her job due to the pandemic, Maria was evicted because she could not pay her rent. But she is ineligible to receive a federal stimulus check through the federal CARES Act because she filed her tax return using an ITIN, Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. If Maria was married to a U.S. citizen and filed her taxes jointly, the entire family would be denied a stimulus check.

Maria is just one of 57,000 persons in ITIN taxpayer households in Massachusetts, according to the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center.

These bills would direct the Massachusetts Department of Revenue to issue stimulus rebates for everyone who paid Massachusetts taxes in 2019 using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number.

Why are ITIN filers deemed ineligible for federal benefits? Because the federal government is discriminating against immigrants. The federal CARES Act prohibited ITIN filers from receiving stimulus checks, further harming the most vulnerable among us during a national emergency.

In the absence of action at the federal level, the Commonwealth must provide for its own.

No one should be prevented from receiving vital support during a pandemic. The League of Women Voters of the United States has joined hundreds of advocacy organizations signing a request to Congress to ensure that COVID-19 relief is available to all—regardless of immigration status. The request states, “By excluding ITIN filers and their family members from access to cash payments, mixed-status immigrant families will be denied critical economic support, including the children, the vast majority of whom are U.S. citizens. They deserve the assistance that the CARES Act provides.”

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has asked all members of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation to support that federal request, which states, “Providing relief to vulnerable and deserving immigrant families will also help reduce the racial disparities that have exacerbated health and economic inequities during this crisis.”

LWVMA, representing 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, stands with immigrants and our partners in the immigrant rights community. As the national League has

stated: “The League is supporting ensuring COVID-19 reliefs are available to all—regardless of immigration status. Congress’s response has thus far excluded many low- and moderate-income immigrants from the public health and stimulus policies. All families should have access to the support they need to stay healthy, put food on the table, and have access to healthcare. If we are serious about addressing the full scale of this public health emergency, we can no longer afford to leave out millions of our community members from the response and must ensure that *everyone* has access to the health care, nutrition and income support they need.”

LWVMA supports these bills and asks that you favorably and expeditiously report them out of committee. Thank you for your consideration.