



MAYOR O'MALLEY & BALTIMORE CASH CAMPAIGN LAUNCH EFFORT TO PROMOTE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

Tax Assistance Volunteers Are Needed

Baltimore (November 12, 2003) – Mayor Martin O'Malley and the Baltimore CASH Campaign launch effort to promote the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) at a press conference today at City Hall at 10:30 am. The Campaign is recruiting volunteers to be trained to assist families prepare simple federal and state tax returns, many of which will include the EITC, which is worth more than \$125 million to low- to moderate-income workers in Baltimore City.

The Baltimore CASH Campaign – *Creating Assets, Savings and Hope* – is a coalition of government agencies, businesses, non-profits, foundations and the IRS dedicated to promoting the benefits of the EITC, offering free tax preparation, and connecting people with financial education and savings opportunities. Last year, the Campaign mobilized 180 volunteers and prepared 1,981 tax returns, returning \$2.8 million in federal refunds to Baltimore communities. Yet, the General Accounting Office estimates that 15-25% of the EITC dollars owed to working families goes unclaimed every year.

“The EITC is already worth more than \$125 million for our low- and moderate-income workers, said Mayor O'Malley. “There's an additional \$30 million or so that goes unclaimed each year by families or individuals who fail to apply for the credit.”

The Mayor was joined by a wide range of business, community and civic leaders including City Councilman Keiffer Mitchell, Congressman Ben Cardin, Annie E. Casey Foundation Director of Civic Investments, Sandra Jibrell, and Johns Hopkins Hospital Vice President for Human Resources, Pamela Paulk.

The EITC is a refundable federal and state tax credit for full-time, part-time or temporary workers, worth up to \$4,961, depending on income and family size. Workers with income less than \$34,692 may be eligible for the credit. The average EITC for Baltimore workers is \$1,710, providing many recipients with increased financial stability.

“The EITC helps families jump-start their financial future by paying bills, reducing debt, opening savings accounts,” said Sandra Jibrell, Director of Civic Investments at the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Many working families forfeit a significant portion of their refund by using commercial tax preparers and purchasing high priced Refund Anticipation Loans (RALs or rapid-

refund loans). An important part of this campaign is to make people aware of alternatives to costly commercial tax services, such as free tax preparation, free e-filing, and direct deposit of refunds for faster returns. The Campaign is also working to connect more families to economic opportunities centered around financial education, free financial services, housing counseling, and Individual Development Accounts that will help them leverage the EITC for asset development.

This year, the Campaign hopes to recruit 400 volunteers and prepare 5,000 tax returns, which could represent \$7.5 million in federal refunds. There will be 13 tax sites operating throughout the city as part of the Baltimore CASH Campaign; all six City District Human Services Centers, Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation, East Harbor Community Development Corporation, Johns Hopkins Hospital for eligible employees, Maryland Center for Arts and Technology, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, Mercy Medical Center for eligible employees, and University of Maryland Law School.

The Campaign is asking local businesses, community groups, churches, schools, and other points of contact for eligible Baltimore workers to help spread the word about Campaign services and to help recruit volunteers. No previous experience is necessary to volunteer. Training will be for one full day in January and volunteers are asked to give at least 16 hours of their time at tax sites between January 24 and April 15, 2004. For more information about the campaign or to register as a volunteer, please contact the Baltimore CASH Campaign at 410-235-5299 or baltimorecashcampaign@hotmail.com. For more information on eligibility or the location of free tax preparation, contact 410-685-0525 in Baltimore, or 1-800-492-0618 in the rest of Maryland.

The Baltimore CASH Campaign works in conjunction with the Maryland EIC Campaign and is a member of the National Tax Assistance for Working Families Campaign. Information about these efforts can be found at www.mdchildcare.org and eitc.info/locations/Baltimore. The Baltimore CASH Campaign is supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Abell Foundation, the Aaron Straus and Lillie Straus Foundation, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, the Alvin and Fanny Blaustein Thalheimer Foundation, and the Clayton Baker Trust.

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