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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, November 1, 2019

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City Attorney, United Way Announce Unique Partnership to Increase Earned Income Tax Credit Opportunities

City Attorney's focus on economic opportunity as part of criminal justice reform efforts led to partnership supporting 'Tax Time'—United Way's free tax preparation service to help residents receive the Earned Income Tax Credit

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein and United Way of Central Ohio president and CEO Lisa Courtice, Ph.D. announced the launch of a unique partnership earlier today that is intended to help low- and moderate-income households access critical tax services.

City Attorney Klein and Ms. Courtice detailed the arrangement for new tax preparation sites and staffing, a public education campaign to raise awareness of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and other facets of the new partnership. They also were joined by Beth Brink, chief administrative officer of the Columbus Income Tax Division.

“Since becoming Columbus City Attorney nearly two years ago, I’ve been committed to finding creative and effective ways to reform the criminal justice system to make it more equitable and fair for all our residents,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“One of the challenging issues that demands our attention is the intersection of poverty and the criminal justice system, and we are dedicated to working with United Way on this partnership to make it a component of our strategy aimed at helping individuals lift themselves up.”**

The new partnership includes several commitments from the City Attorney’s Office:

- A full-time staff member’s community outreach responsibilities will be expanded to include assisting with increasing the capacity and reach of the [Tax Time](#) program.
- Opening a new tax site at the Columbus City Attorney’s Prosecutor Division, located at the Franklin County Municipal Courthouse. The site will be open Tuesday-Thursday from 2:00-6:00 p.m. during tax season, and will be staffed by trained and certified City Attorney employees.
- COTA will open a new tax site at its downtown office, which will be staffed by volunteers from the City Attorney’s Office. COTA’s sponsorship also will include audio and visual advertising on buses and transit centers to promote greater public awareness of the EITC and Tax Time program.

- The City of Columbus government television station (C-TV) will help produce a public service announcement to increase public awareness of the EITC and Tax Time program.

The EITC is a special emphasis for the new partnership. According to the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#), earned income and child tax credits were estimated to have helped lift 8.9 million people out of poverty in 2017.

“This unique new partnership will help accelerate and expand the work Tax Time has done to help hardworking families receive the refunds they need to become more financially stable and prosper,” said Lisa Courtice, president and CEO of United Way of Central Ohio. “It’s a great example of how City Attorney Klein is investing in effective ways to help people and how United Way is building collaborations that fight poverty and create prosperity.”

Tax Time—which is sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service, City of Columbus, Franklin County Job and Family Services, Park National Bank, Huntington Bank, Fifth Third Bank, PNC Bank, and COTA—is a network of nonprofit, business, and government organizations that works to provide free tax preparation services and connect low- and moderate-income households to financial resources.

Combining the United Way of Central Ohio’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and AARP’s Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program, Tax Time operates over 30 sites throughout Franklin County during tax season every year from January through April. Other lead partners include the [Legal Aid Society of Columbus](#) and [HandsOn Central Ohio](#).

With the help of trained and certified volunteers who prepare federal and state tax returns, Tax Time has served over 137,000 clients—saving them an estimated \$8.7 million in tax preparation fees since 2007.

While the average income of Tax Time clients in 2019 was around \$26,000, the income cap for next year is \$56,000.

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