

Testimony in support of HB 346 – Tax Clinics for Low-Income Marylanders – Funding Repeal of Sunset

Before the House Ways and Means Committee

February 9, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and members of the Ways and Means Committee. My name is Renee Hutchins, Dean of the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law, Low Income Taxpayer Clinic. I am pleased to join Delegate Rosenberg and my colleagues from the University of Baltimore (UBalt) and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Services (MVLS) in supporting HB 346.

During the 2021 Legislative Session, a special fund was created to provide supplemental grant funding for the University of Maryland Carey School of Law, the University of Baltimore School of Law, and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS) to operate tax clinics for low-income state residents. While tax clinics already existed at all three entities, they were only permitted to assist citizens with federal tax related issues since the clinics received grants from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The passage of SB 480 and HB 421 in 2021 which received overwhelming support from the Legislature, enabled the clinics to establish resources and outreach efforts to provide support for state related tax issues for Marylanders.

I am pleased to share with you the incredible work Carey School of Law has been engaged in to actively support Marylanders since standing up our Low-Income Tax Clinic:

- We conducted 16 outreach activities (in person and virtual) estimating our reach to approximately 40,862 Maryland taxpayers
- Assisted Maryland taxpayers resolve their Maryland tax problems by:
 - securing refunds (7 taxpayers)
 - assisting with state audit of tax returns (26 taxpayers)
 - assisting with innocent spouse claim (2 taxpayers)
- Aided Marylanders with repaying outstanding MD taxes (60 taxpayers) by
 - Setting up payment plans
 - Filing Offers in Compromise
 - Requesting hardship status

And we have served clients from all over the state. Specifically, from Anne Arundel, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Frederick,

Harford, Howard, Montgomery, Prince Georges, Queen Anne, St. Mary's, and Talbot counties.

The majority of our cases closed in 6 months or less.

The 2021 legislation called for the Comptroller to distribute \$250,000 equally divided between the three entities (UBalt, UMCSOL and MVLS) for fiscal 2022 and 2023. In order to continue our good work for the citizens of Maryland, it is imperative that SB 312 pass so that funding of the program can continue in fiscal year 2024 and beyond.

We are excited to further our work and continue to support Marylanders in resolving state related tax issues which proves beneficial to not only our citizens but to the state as well. HB 346 ensures that hard-working Marylanders with tax disputes get the representation they deserve. Therefore, I strongly urge the Committee to provide a favorable report on HB 346.

Thank you for your consideration.