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**MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG, 1199/SEIU HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICE
UNION PRESIDENT DENNIS RIVERA, UNITE HERE EXECUTIVE VICE
PRESIDENT PETER WARD, JACKSON HEWITT TAX SERVICE AND H&R
BLOCK LAUNCH EFFORT TO BOOST FILINGS FOR THE EARNED INCOME
TAX CREDIT**

***Free Tax Prep Sites Open Citywide and Eligible Union Members Receive
Discount Vouchers for Tax Preparation***

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, 1199 SEIU Health and Human Service Union President Dennis Rivera, UNITE HERE Executive Vice President Peter Ward, Jackson Hewitt Tax Service Incorporated Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Michael Lister, and H&R Block Vice President & Chief Compliance Officer Murray Walton today launched a pilot program that will link the nation's two largest tax chains with the members of unions who are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Mayor Bloomberg, joined by Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra, Community Food Resource Center (CFRC) President Richard Murphy, union leaders, tax preparers, non-profit leaders and EITC recipients, reminded New Yorkers earning less than \$35,000 to claim the credit when they file their taxes. The EITC returns millions of federal, state, and city tax dollars to working families. In some cases, families earning less than \$35,000 can receive up to almost \$6,000 at tax time from the federal and state and the recently enacted New York City EITC will boost the additional credit to qualifying families to a maximum of \$215 this year. This is the third year the City has undertaken an effort to inform and educate eligible New Yorkers about the free tax assistance available when claiming the EITC. There are an estimated 200,000 New York residents who are eligible for the EITC, yet never submit a claim.

"As I said yesterday in my State of the City address in the Bronx, one way our administration is tackling poverty is with the City's recently enacted Earned Income Tax Credit which could mean an additional \$215 on top of federal and state taxes credit which could reach almost up to \$6,000 for some families," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Members of participating unions who are eligible for the EITC will have access to discount vouchers for use at private tax preparers and we encourage all EITC-eligible workers to file at one of the free City coalition sites or through a private preparer. By further extending tax credits to those who work and are struggling to raise their families, by partnering with private sector tax preparers, and offering no-charge tax services to some residents, we are reaffirming our commitment to care for all New Yorkers and to address the tough problems head on."

Full-time and part-time workers, including self-employed workers, who are legally authorized to work in the United States, are eligible for the tax credit. Families with more than one child earning less than \$35,458 annually could receive up to \$5,805; families with one child earning less than \$31,338 annually could receive up to \$3,515; and individuals without children age 25 - 64, making less than \$11,490 annually could receive up to \$527.

Last year, the average combined EITC credit for New York City was \$2,355. If every eligible resident took advantage of the EITC it would translate to \$470 million spent in our local economy.

"For the dedicated and underpaid health care workers of New York - especially home care workers - every single dollar counts," said 1199/SEIU Health & Human Service Union President Dennis Rivera. "We are proud to be a partner in the New York City/Union Tax Saving Project. This program is yet another attempt to help return millions of dollars to the people who worked so hard to earn them. On behalf of our 250,000 members in New York State we welcome the opportunity to join in this effort to help more struggling families get the tax money they earned."

Under the pilot program, H&R Block and Jackson Hewitt will prepare taxes at a sharply discounted rate for an estimated 95,500 workers from four unions: SEIU-1199, UNITE HERE-including the Hotel Trades Council, the Communications Workers of America Local 1182, and the Professional Staff Congress. Union members will receive coupons good for \$50 off the cost of tax preparation. The pilot program will be monitored and, if successful in boosting the rate of EITC filings, will be expanded next year.

"The workers who qualify for the EITC are the backbone of this city, proudly earning a living and raising their families," said UNITE HERE Executive Vice President Peter Ward. "Every dollar helps in these tough times and UNITE HERE is pleased to offer our members another chance to claim this money that they deserve."

"DCA's coordination of the citywide EITC campaign and its strong record of protecting taxpayers have paved the way for this partnership," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "And this year we are setting the bar even higher. We'll distribute more than three million brochures in eleven different languages, we are trying to get EITC filers to open basic bank accounts, we're proud that both President Bill Clinton and the New York Post have joined us, and we have high hopes for this new partnership with the coalition, commercial tax preparers and the unions."

The NYC EITC Coalition, led by the DCA, will also continue to promote the EITC through subway and bus ads and provide free tax assistance at a number of sites throughout the City. The Coalition has surpassed its goals helping more than 40,000 New Yorkers get more than \$50 million at coalition sites alone. Last year the average New York City EITC refund was \$2,355, with many receiving the maximum, more than \$5,000. Eligible workers can also file the EITC retroactively for up to three years, and in some cases receive multiple refunds. Coalition partner Community Food Resource Center runs the busiest free tax sites in the nation, in Harlem and the Bronx.

"H&R Block appreciates the opportunity to be involved in this EITC pilot project. The Federal, State and City earned income tax credits can increase eligible New York City taxpayers' refunds by up to \$5,805," said Murray Walton, Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer for H&R Block. "Our 5,000 associates are ready at almost 400 H&R Block offices throughout the metropolitan area to help their fellow New Yorkers get every tax advantage they deserve."

"We, and our New York City area franchisees, are honored to partner with the New York City EITC Coalition in its continuing effort to create awareness and increase the number of EITC recipients," said Michael Lister, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Jackson Hewitt Tax Service Inc. "Today's event is truly auspicious as it celebrates the dedication of Mayor Bloomberg, the New York City DCA and the participating Unions to bring people and organizations together to further such a worthy initiative. We are excited to take part in this pilot program by providing tax preparation savings to Union employees and seeking to increase awareness of EITC to the masses."

"CFRC completed 25,000 free quality tax returns last year and brought millions of dollars in EITC into the wallets and communities of low-income New Yorkers," said

Richard Murphy, Executive Director of Community Food Resource Center. "This year we are looking to surpass our numbers and have added two additional tax sites, for a total of twelve, that now cover all five boroughs. Supported by local and national foundations in this effort, CFRC is proud to be a partner in the City EITC campaign."

For the third year, New Yorkers will be able to locate the free tax assistance site most convenient for them by dialing 311. The Citywide EITC campaign boasts more than 100 non-profit, corporate and government partners. Materials are available in the following eleven languages: English, Spanish, Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Haitian, Hindi, Korean, Russian, and Urdu. For more information about the EITC, call 311, or go online at www.nyc.gov/eitc.