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March 26, 2021

The Honorable Charles Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig,

I write today to express deep concern regarding inequitable access to the third round of Economic Impact Payments (EIP3s) for our unhoused community in Missouri's 1st Congressional District and in communities throughout the nation. I urge the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to consider working with the Free File Alliance to re-open the Non-Filer Portal to allow swift and equitable payment distribution to non-filers, particularly people who are unhoused. Requiring the completion of the more complex Form 1040 in lieu of the simpler Non-Filer Portal adds another obstacle that drastically restricts access to EIP3s.

In Missouri alone, there are over 4,000 unhoused individuals and 2,000 unhoused families with children who are eligible to receive this critical relief payment.¹ Two weeks ago, Congress passed, and President Biden signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act—a \$1.9 trillion relief and recovery effort that will provide billions of dollars in urgently needed direct cash to people and families all across this country. The very purpose of the \$1,400 Economic Impact Payments is to ensure people and families who are struggling have adequate support amid this devastating global pandemic and economic crisis. As homelessness skyrockets in the wake of this economic crisis, the federal government must ensure robust accommodations and access to all those eligible for the stimulus check, particularly those communities that are hardest to reach.

As it stands now, unhoused people in the St. Louis region and around the nation must overcome daunting barriers when filing the required paperwork, including: understanding and completing federal forms, stable internet access, functioning electronic devices, a reliable address, and awareness of constantly changing rules and procedures. Immediate action to address return filing difficulties would significantly impact the nearly 12 million people who desperately need to obtain their EIP3s.²

¹https://www.thecentersquare.com/missouri/missouri-homeless-population-numbered-6-179-last-year-study-finds/article_55c0fd0-5086-11eb-ab35-e32fd1cecbf8.html

²<https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-tax/aggressive-state-outreach-can-help-reach-the-12-million-non-filers-eligible>

In April of 2020, the IRS increased outreach to underserved communities, enabling them to access these live-saving Economic Impact Payments through the Non-Filer Portal. In a heartfelt message announcing the first EIP, you wrote: “We reached beyond our normal contacts in an effort to get these payments distributed to many lower income, non-filers, military, veteran and homeless communities.”³ This was a welcome and necessary initiative. Sadly, nearly a year later, these very same communities are in dire need of continued outreach and resources as the country works to address the ongoing crisis.

As someone who has been unhoused and who continues to work deeply with this community, I understand the myriad of barriers that can make accessing relief near impossible. Unhoused individuals are among the most vulnerable members of our communities and deserve federal assistance to access their EIP3. It is for these reasons that I urge the IRS to uphold the high standards of outreach and access set forth during the first EIP by working with the Free File Alliance to re-open the Non-Filer Portal, creating an expedient alternative for individuals without internet access, and issuing guidance to ensure our unhoused community can receive their stimulus checks as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to working in collaboration with the IRS to ensure Economic Impact Payments are distributed to those who need it most during this unprecedented pandemic. Please respond to this urgent request prior to Friday, April 23, 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cori Bush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CORI BUSH
Member of Congress

³<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/a-message-from-the-commissioner-economic-impact-payments-irs-helping-150-million-americans-one-payment-at-a-time>