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Charitable Contributions

You may claim a deduction on your income tax Form 1040 for an exchange student living with you while he or she is attending high school. Currently, there is a bill in front of Congress to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase the deduction for host families of foreign exchange students from \$50 per month to \$200 per month.

February 25, 2003, Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) introduced legislation that would increase the monthly tax deduction for families hosting high school exchange students from \$50 (established several decades ago) to \$200. The bill, titled the "Youth Exchange Support Act" (HR 869) would increase the deduction to the annual cost-of-living adjustment, automatically adjusted yearly. The Consumer Price Index data from 1999 estimates that families spend an average of \$587 to \$1150 per month to maintain a 15-17 year old. Rep. Andrews said, "The current deduction does not even begin to cover the expenses incurred by host families of exchange students, but I believe that an increase to \$200 per month of stay will ease the financial burden on current host families, and encourage other families to host an exchange student in the future."

Your letters and phone calls do matter. Rep. Andrews authored the legislation after a conversation with a New Jersey Youth for Understanding volunteer. Please send a letter to your House member expressing support for H.R. 869 and to your Senators, requesting an increase in the host family deduction. Because the use of e-mail tends to be less effective with Congressional offices, please write a letter (see sample letter below) and mail or fax it.

You need help identifying your member of Congress or Senators, please call the Alliance toll free at 1/888-304-9023. Or, to find your federal representatives online, visit <http://congress.nw.dc.us/c-span/home/> and enter your zip code. For phone and fax numbers, addresses and useful biographical information, click "info".

Because this measure is a tax issue, it is especially critical to convince Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee members to cosponsor the measure.

TEMPLATE LETTERS

Letter to House of Representatives

Dear _____:

I am writing to urge you to cosponsor H.R. 869, the Youth Exchange Support Act, authored by Rep. Rob Andrews, which would provide modest tax relief for thousands of middle class, working families who open their homes to foreign exchange students from around the world. His bill would raise the current deduction of \$50 per month, which has not been adjusted in over 30 years, to \$200 per month. [insert anecdote about your hosting experience(s) and the benefits to your family and community]

As host family volunteers, we take pride in our community and share what we value with the rest of the world. Raising the tax deduction to \$200 per month is somewhat symbolic, because the average host family actually spends several hundred dollars on a foreign exchange student each week. Nonetheless, the increase in this tax deduction sends an important message to the approximately 30,000 families who open their homes to foreign students each year, and will encourage more families to host. The deduction signals to host families throughout the U.S. that our contributions are valued.

Host families give youth from around the world an opportunity to live in a democratic, open society, to appreciate the importance of volunteering, and gain a deep appreciation of American cultures and values. In return, foreign exchange students provide a window to the world for many Americans who otherwise would not have exposure to foreign countries and cultures. This exposure helps prepare Americans to deal effectively in our ever-shrinking world. I urge you to cosponsor this key legislation and raise the tax deduction for working families like ours.

Sincerely, [your name]

U.S. Senate

Dear _____:

I am writing to urge you to provide modest tax relief for thousands of middle class, working families who open their homes to foreign exchange students from around the world. In the House, Rep. Rob Andrews introduced legislation (H.R. 869) that would raise the tax deduction to \$200 per month, implementing an adjustment to the current \$50 deduction that hasn't been changed in over 30 years. I ask that you introduce similar legislation in the Senate. [Insert anecdote about your hosting experience(s) and the benefits to your family and community]

As host family volunteers, we take pride in our community and share what we value with the rest of the world. Raising the tax deduction to \$200 per month would provide both symbolic support and substantive relief. The average host family actually spends several hundred dollars on a foreign exchange student each week.

Nevertheless, the increase in this tax deduction sends an important message to the approximate 30,000 families who open their homes to foreign students each year. The deduction signals to host families throughout the U.S. that our contributions are valued.

Host families give youth from around the world an opportunity to live in a democratic, open society, to appreciate the importance of volunteering, and gain a deep appreciation of American cultures and values. In return, foreign exchange students provide a window to the world for many Americans who otherwise would not have exposure to foreign countries and cultures. This exposure helps prepare Americans to deal effectively in our ever-shrinking world. I urge you to support an increase in the tax deduction for working families like ours by introducing a legislative fix such as H.R. 869, the Youth Exchange Support Act.

Sincerely,

[your name]