***Opinion Editorial***

*Most newspapers feature an op-ed (or opinion editorial) section in which readers and public figures can express viewpoints and/or respond to particular news events. Each newspaper has its own length requirement, but they tend to be between 600-700 words long. With these longer word requirements, op-eds provide you with the perfect opportunity to describe your point of view in more detail and share all relevant information about free IRS-sponsored tax preparation services like Free File, VITA, and TCE, as well as your organization. These submissions can be authored by your organization's director, a VITA volunteer, or a community leader. The below template can serve as a guide as you consider writing your own op-ed.*

**Free File Helps Americans Take Advantage of the Tax Time Moment**

*By [Name, Title, Organization]*

For many Americans, tax season is a time of stress, frustration, and confusion. The stakes are high and the pressure is on. However, tax time also presents one of the biggest opportunities for Americans across the country and across the economic spectrum to improve their financial lives for the coming year. [If there is a local hook, please include in the opening paragraph]

Tax refunds are predictable, timely, and, for many filers, the biggest paycheck they see all year. In fact, for low- to-moderate income filers, a tax refund can make up over 30 percent of a family’s annual income. Receiving that much money is exciting but it also creates the ideal opportunity to save and plan for a better financial future. We call this opportunity the *Tax Time Moment.*

[Name of Organization] has been proud to assist our community for over [XX] years in helping people keep more of their hard-earned money, maximize the *Tax Time Moment*, and take control of their financial health. [Insert Specific Information About Other Tax Prep Programs You May Offer]. We have seen first-hand the difference that tax time savings can make in the lives of people across our community, which is why we feel so strongly that everyone deserves the chance to make the most of their tax refund.

But in order to get the full refund they are owed and maximize this critical opportunity, filers have to ensure that their taxes are filed securely, correctly, and on time. Which begs the question: how can filers get their taxes done right and for as little cost as possible? For over 70 percent of Americans, the answer is clear: the IRS Free File program.

The IRS Free File program is a partnership between the IRS and some of the nation’s most trusted tax software companies to provide free federal tax return preparation assistance to Americans across the country at no cost. Companies donate their products for this purpose, and they are approved by the IRS ensuring that the process is safe and secure.

Free File encourages its users to e-file their taxes—the fastest and most secure way to secure your refund. And since it’s online, taxpayers can use Free File anywhere they can access the Internet: from a public library or a community center to the comfort of their home.

This program is nothing new. Since its founding in 2003, Free File has saved Americans over $1.6 billion in tax preparation costs, and has made all the difference for some families. What’s been even more impactful is that over 53 million Americans have been able to secure the entire refund that they were owed, which has empowered them to better understand their finances and to make a new, financially healthy start in the coming years.

And it turns out that the vast majority of us, over 100 million Americans, are eligible for the program. Anyone who made $66,000 or less last year is able to use at least one of these industry-leading tax preparation software programs free of charge. Taxpayers living in [State, if Applicable] can also file their state taxes at no cost through the program.

For those seeking in-person help and generally making $54,000 or less, local Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs are available and staffed with IRS-certified volunteers who can help prepare accurate returns safely, securely, and free of charge.

Tax time can and should be a moment of excitement and opportunity, not stress and confusion. Every American deserves financial freedom, and we have seen, time and again, that a successful *Tax Time Moment*, achieved through Free File, is one of the simplest ways to get there.

*[Insert Author Name, Title, and Organization]*