

Testimony:

Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important matter regarding tax policies in Pennsylvania. My name is Jonathan Huskey. I'm the Communications Director at the State Revenue Alliance.

I'm here today to shed light on the public sentiment regarding taxes, particularly as it pertains to raising taxes on the wealthy, both in Pennsylvania and nationally. My professional background as it relates to tax policy and public opinion polling includes working at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and a decade working for the members of the Service Employees International Union, primarily in the public sector. I also have professional experience with survey methodology, though I am not a pollster, nor did I directly conduct the research I'll present. So I can give you insight into the public's response to various revenue proposals, I probably cannot answer all of the questions around modern polling techniques.

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of income inequality and its impacts on our society. While there can and should be more research done to probe the public's view on taxes, we know, through extensive polling conducted across the country, that there is widespread support for raising taxes on the wealthy and on wealth. I'll point to specific surveys and other forms of quantifying public support for the tenets of the Fair Share Tax Plan, which at its core, is about rebalancing the tax code to value work rather than wealth.

In November and December of 2022, national research firm Data for Progress conducted a survey of registered voters to gauge policy support for ensuring that profitable corporations and the wealthy are paying their fair share of taxes. The national survey was then used to estimate opinion at the state level, using a machine learning model trained on nationally representative survey responses linked to a commercial voter file.

The survey asked a series of simple questions about revenue and public spending. Statewide, the model estimates that eighty two percent of Pennsylvania registered voters support the statement that profitable corporations and wealthy individuals are not paying enough in state taxes.

It also estimates that eighty four percent of Pennsylvanians believe that state lawmakers should do more to hold accountable corporations who avoid paying taxes.

Data for Progress conducted 12,000 interviews, which allowed for building a model that is reliable for state legislative analysis. For example, in Representative Rabb's district, over ninety percent of registered voters are estimated to believe that the state should make sure that corporate taxes are more transparent and that corporations, and other wealthy Pennsylvanians, aren't paying their fair share. In Representative Fritz' district, the model estimates that seventy-six percent of registered voters say that wealthy individuals and profitable corporations aren't paying enough in state taxes.

The Data for Progress results in Pennsylvania reflect similar voter attitudes toward taxes as other state polls.

The Tax Justice Initiative brings organizers, policy experts, and lawmakers from states across the country to work together to transform the state revenue landscape to favor working families rather than the wealthy.

Pennsylvania joined this cohort of states in 2024.

Polling from TargetSmart in 2023, for the Tax Justice Initiative found that in six states, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, New York, Nevada and Washington, large majorities wanted to raise a variety of taxes that were and are proposed in those states. They range from high earner taxes, to wealth taxes, to estate taxes.

This data from these state-based datasets show that voters support a variety of specific policy prescriptions for raising revenue by raising taxes on the wealthy. The Fair Share Tax Plan is likely especially popular because it reflects the reality of the vast majority of state tax systems, including Pennsylvania's, which requires working people to effectively pay more than the ultra wealthy.

Last year, Pew found that the biggest complaint about taxes in America is that most people don't believe the rich are paying their fair share.

Lake Research and HIT Strategies conducted a multi-modal project in 2021 and found that people from a variety of demographics consistently believe that middle class, low income and small businesses are paying more than they should be, and the richest are paying too little in taxes.

Research released this week, on February 27th, by [Navigator Research](#) shows that the public continues to be broadly supportive of raising taxes on the rich, and that support continues to be bipartisan.. They found that:

“Four in five Americans support raising taxes on the rich (79 percent), including 94 percent of Democrats, 78 percent of independents, and 63 percent of Republicans. Nearly two in three Americans who say they voted for Donald Trump in 2020 support raising taxes on the wealthy (63 percent), along with over four in five who say they are unfavorable to both Joe Biden and Donald Trump (85 percent).”

By implementing fair and thoughtful taxation policies that ask those with the greatest means to contribute more, we can create a more just and equitable society for everyone. This approach not only generates much-needed revenue for you, the elected leaders of Pennsylvania, to invest in vital public services but also reflects the will of the people, from Philadelphia to Lehigh County to New Castle, that you work day in and day out to improve their well-being.

Thank you for your attention and the honor of addressing you today.