



**GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.**

United Way of Pennsylvania  
www.uwp.org

**2019 – 2020  
PRIORITIES FOR THE COMMON GOOD**

United Way fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in each community. United Way has the expertise and relationships to develop meaningful and lasting cross-sector solutions to community challenges. Through the generosity of donors, United Ways are able to reduce burdens on public sector programs, and to serve people who do not qualify for public benefits but do not earn enough to meet their family's basic needs.

The United Way of Pennsylvania, a nonprofit and nonpartisan membership organization representing 46 local United Ways and 4 United Funds in Pennsylvania, is supporting the following public policy priorities to advance the common good during the Pennsylvania General Assembly's 2019-2020 legislative session.

**PA 2-1-1: Connecting Pennsylvanians to the Right Service at the Right Time**

Imagine a service that can provide policymakers with data that identifies the most pressing unmet health and human service needs in communities. 2-1-1 is funded by a combination of United Way support, state money, grants and private contributions, and contracts. This service is a one-stop connection for any Pennsylvanian to receive a referral for any service because 2-1-1 possesses the most comprehensive database of public and private resources available in communities. United Way is leading the charge to make sure this service is available to all Pennsylvanians 24/7/365, as well as through phone, text, chat and web access to community resources.

**This service is a one-stop connection for any Pennsylvanian to get help with a health or human service need.**

**UWP Supports:**

- Investment of state funds to continue a public-private partnership, strengthen 2-1-1 and assure a consistent experience for every user in the state.
- Explore ways to increase the efficiency of state and local governments by contracting to provide services currently offered through government-operated information phone hotlines.
- Providing data for health and human service planning at the state and local level.

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- Working closely with state agencies including the Departments of Aging, Health, Human Services, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to define shared goals to save taxpayer dollars by connecting Pennsylvanians in need to the right services at the right time.

## High Quality Early Childhood Education and Out of School Time Activities to Prepare PA's Kids for the Jobs of Tomorrow

**United Way of Pennsylvania support access to high-quality and affordable early learning and child care, as well as out-of-school time to benefit our children and support Pennsylvania's workforce.**

United Way's network goals include increasing school readiness and assuring that children read at grade level by third grade, successful completion of middle school and increasing high school graduation rates. Local United Ways advance these goals in numerous ways, including funding high quality early education slots, summer learning programs, truancy prevention and after school programs.

Positive outcomes of high quality early childhood education include developing foundational social and emotional skills, reducing the need for special education and remedial instruction, increasing the likelihood of graduation and college enrollment, and decreasing dropout rates, crime and incarceration. Every dollar invested returns up to \$4 in savings and benefits to the state. Support for public investment in pre-k has grown, with three-out-of-every-four voters in support of more pre-k funding and two-thirds of voters supporting a tax increase to fund pre-k access. Pennsylvanians value pre-k education for its proven benefits, and are willing to dig deeper into their own pockets to support expanded access for kids across the commonwealth. Further, 94 percent believe early childhood education is important to help people lead healthy and productive lives.

High-quality child care supports healthy child development and serves a critical need for working parents. Research demonstrates high-quality child care improves a child's cognitive, language, social and emotional development, early learning and school achievement. Children from families with few resources and under great stress benefit most from quality child care. In 2017, 70 percent of Pennsylvania children under the age of six had all adults in their household in the workforce, requiring each of these children to spend at least part of their week in care outside of their home. About 20 percent of these families are living in poverty, and many more working families find it difficult to afford child care. In a recent poll by Magellan Strategies, over half of Pennsylvania residents support funding high-quality child care.

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Studies have also demonstrated that out of school time programs offer another opportunity for disadvantaged students to gain ground. Students in quality OST programs attend school more often, have higher grades and standardized test scores, and show improvements in their behavior. OST programs also improve work habits and lead to higher levels of persistence. Summer programming offsets the summer slide, which can prevent students from beginning a new school year an average of one month behind in academic progress they attained at the end of the prior school year. Pennsylvania will also face work force shortages in several fields during the coming decades, including science and technology, health care and accounting. There is an opportunity to align OST programs to help address these work force needs and prepare students for family-sustaining jobs.

#### **UWP Supports:**

- Assuring all children have access to consistent, high quality and affordable early learning. United Way supports increased funding for pre-kindergarten and Head State programs with investments targeted to at-risk kids.
- Assuring all children have access to reliable, high quality and affordable child care. United Way of Pennsylvania supports increased funding for Child Care Services to continue to provide support to children on the child care subsidy waitlist.
- Ensuring workforce development initiatives include opportunities for child care workers, both in Pre-K and high-quality child care settings, to realize opportunities to further their training and career.
- Increased state and federal funding for the child care development block grant to support the healthy development and school readiness needs of children, including a focus on increasing quality.
- Creating a forum for out of school time program funders, providers, schools and policy makers to identify stable sources of funding, consider quality program standards, and foster partnerships to support out of school time activities.
- Incentives for aligning out of school activities with Pennsylvania's projected work force needs in order to prepare Pennsylvania's kids for high-demand, family sustaining job.

#### **Income Stability and Family Self-Sufficiency: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty**

United Way's goals are to increase family-sustaining employment, assure access to income supports for those who need it, address challenges to the affordability of housing and help families grow savings and assets.

Poverty is a common measure used to identify needs; however, the federal poverty rate is inadequate for measuring the full scope of financial need throughout the country. In

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Pennsylvania, there are thousands of working families who cannot satisfy the costs of a survival budget, let alone plan for the future. In 2019, United Way of Pennsylvania is launching a research-based model to fully understand the population of Pennsylvanians struggling to support their basic, everyday needs. They include our neighbors who are working, sometimes multiple jobs, but can't afford adequate housing, child care or health care for their families.

United Way of Pennsylvania supports policies that facilitate access to family-sustaining employment. Pennsylvania will experience work force shortages as the baby-boomer generation retires and technology continues to advance. In order to help more families, break the cycle of poverty and ensure a workforce that is able to meet increased basic costs of living.

**PA's work force needs training and education to fill skills gaps. Systemic solutions are also needed to address lack of access to transportation or affordable child care which affect our state's potential work force.**

#### **UWP Supports:**

- State and federal Earned Income Tax Credits to support working families and reduce poverty.
- Improving Pennsylvania's affordable housing options in rural and urban areas for median and low-income individuals and families, along with veterans, seniors and the disabled.
- Job training and career development policies which align to address impending work force shortages.
- Workforce development initiatives that help more of PA's population achieve jobs that provide family-sustaining wages and lift them to a level of financial sustainability.
- Expanding access to vital and affordable health care programs including Medicaid and CHIP which provide all essential health benefits including behavioral health services.
- Maintaining Pennsylvania's strong laws, which prohibit predatory lenders from taking advantage of individuals with limited to no income.

#### **State Budgeting to Strengthen Communities**

State government relies on thousands of nonprofits to deliver services to Pennsylvanians. Nonprofits pride themselves on their ingenuity and their commitment to serve the public, and take very seriously the public trust that is placed in their work. We urge the Governor and the legislature to make budgetary decisions which will assure that their nonprofit service delivery partners are supported to complete this work.

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United Way of Pennsylvania will advocate for funding levels which support our work to fight for the health, education and financial stability of every person in each community in our state. We urge the General Assembly and the Governor to recognize that funding levels for many services have not kept pace with increases in demands, nor increases in costs of providing services.

**Government should invest in health and human service programs which demonstrate positive outcomes or provide basic safety net services for Pennsylvanians.**

Every Commonwealth budget impasse is devastating to the service delivery system. They result in service disruptions or waiting lists for much-needed help for Pennsylvania's vulnerable citizens. Even where providers are able to maintain services due to borrowing or drawing on organizational reserves, the impasse causes resources to be diverted away from services.

**UWP supports:**

- Amendments to state law which protect Pennsylvania's service recipients and service providers by assuring that federal dollars allocated to the Commonwealth, and state dollars for essential services that directly impact the health and safety of Pennsylvanians, continue to be paid during a budget impasse. We also support changes to the state budget process which will decrease the likelihood of future budget impasses.
- Fair and adequate funding for human services.

**For more information about any of these priorities, contact:**

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