



**GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.**

United Way  
of Pennsylvania

## **2020 – 2021 PRIORITIES FOR THE COMMON GOOD**

United Way fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in every 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 the burdens on public sector programs to serve people who do not qualify for public benefits and do not earn enough to meet their family's basic needs.

United Way of Pennsylvania, a nonprofit and nonpartisan membership organization representing 44 local United Ways and 2 United Funds in Pennsylvania, is supporting the following public policy priorities as a means of moving forward after an unprecedented year. Our policy priorities seek to advance the common good through advocacy, engagement, and partnerships during the Pennsylvania General Assembly's 2020-2021 legislative session.

### **Income Stability and Family Self-Sufficiency: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty with a State Earned Income Tax Credit**

The impact of COVID-19 on Pennsylvania's economy coupled with the Commonwealth's ever-increasing annual budgetary deficit have created a prime opportunity to enact policies that will boost Pennsylvania's economy and encourage work. The United Way network supports expansion to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) including the creation of a state EITC that will benefit Pennsylvania families.

ALICE (**A**sset Limited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed) families are working families that earn above the Federal Poverty Level, but below a conservative measure of financial stability. Of Pennsylvania's 5,067,682 households, 39% (1,971,026 households) had income below the ALICE Threshold. For many families, a refund provides much needed financial resources to help move towards financial stability. The ALICE Household Survival Budget indicates that families mostly use the EITC to pay for necessities, to repair homes, maintain vehicles that are needed to commute to work, and in some cases, obtain additional education or training to boost their employability and earning power.

**A State Earned Income Tax Credit gives income back to hardworking Pennsylvanians and is reinvested back into the state economy.**

#### **UWP Supports:**

- State and federal Earned Income Tax Credits to support working families and reduce poverty.

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- Maintaining Pennsylvania’s strong laws, which prohibit predatory lenders from taking advantage of individuals with limited to no income.

## PA 211: Measuring Need, Connecting Volunteers, and Assisting People in Need

Imagine a service that can provide policymakers with data that identifies the most pressing unmet health and human service needs in communities. 211 is funded by a combination of United Way support, state money, grants, private contributions, and contracts. This service is a one-stop connection for all Pennsylvanians to receive a referral for any service. PA 211 supports Pennsylvanians during times of need and times of disaster, including during the COVID-19 Pandemic. 211 possesses the most comprehensive database of public and private resources available in communities. United Way is leading the charge to make sure 211 is available to all Pennsylvanians 24/7/365, as well as through phone, text, and web access to community resources.

**This service is a one-stop connection for any Pennsylvania to get a referral for any service.**

PA 211 steps up to serve Pennsylvanians and is focused on maintaining accurate and reliable data to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness. Information and data on the calls PA 211 receives is available instantly and in real time at [pa.211counts.org](http://pa.211counts.org). PA 211 also provided a volume of data to the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee for inclusion in its report entitled, “A Report on the Pennsylvania Health and Human Services Hotlines.” Of the 66 hotlines covered in the report, 18 were unable to provide any financial or operational information and others were only able to provide portions of the requested statistics. PA 211 provided all data requested and demonstrated our transparency, accountability and stewardship of public dollars.

### UWP Supports:

- Investment of state funds to continue a public-private partnership, strengthen 211, 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.
- 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.

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

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

**United Way of Pennsylvania supports policies which increase access to high quality and affordable early learning and out of school time activities.**

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. United Way of Pennsylvania supports policies which increase access to high quality and affordable early learning and out of school time activities. Both are essential to developing a qualified work force for Pennsylvania's future.

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.

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.

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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 also faces work force shortages in several fields during

the coming decades, including science and technology, health care and accounting. We have 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 Start 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 jobs.

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## Prenatal to Age Three Health, Nutrition, and Community Engagement for Pennsylvania Families and Children

Today's babies are tomorrow's future and United Way's network goals include increasing the success of child development through prenatal and child health care, nutrition, and community assistance. United Way of Pennsylvania commits to advocating for policies and funding that encourage and assist the wellbeing of families and children. Parents are often a child's first teachers and ensuring access to evidence-based tools and information for our families is our priority.

**United Way of  
Pennsylvania  
supports policies that  
promote family health**

Children's development is ongoing and requires an array of services to meet their physical and behavioral health care need. Health insurance helps provide access to preventative and primary health care services and can offer peace of mind and financial security for families.

### UWP Supports:

- Assuring all children have access to health care by building on the success of Medicaid and CHIP. United Way supports increased funding for Medicaid and CHIP and targeted investments for at risk families.
- Promoting efforts to identify, improve, and maximize good health for children and families through nutritional opportunities, the decreasing of lead exposure in children, and the maternal health access for expecting and new parents.
- Supporting the expansion of evidence-based home visiting financing and strategies. Home visiting programs are shown to promote child development and school readiness; improve maternal and child health; reduce child abuse and neglect; and support family economic self-sufficiency.

## Support Pennsylvania Families as Our Communities Recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic's Impacts

State government relies on thousands of nonprofits to deliver services to Pennsylvanians. The COVID-19 Pandemic was an opportunity for nonprofits to pride themselves on their ingenuity and their commitment to serve the public. We urge the Governor and the legislature to take steps which will assure that their service delivery partners are supported to complete this work.

United Way of Pennsylvania advocates for funding levels that support our work to fight for the health, financial stability and education of every person in each community in our state. We

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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. Now, more than ever, the investment in health and human service programs, which demonstrate positive outcomes and provide basic safety net services for Pennsylvanians, is needed. United Way of Pennsylvania is looking forward while ensuring our communities do not get left behind. It is essential that health and human services receive the necessary investments so that we may stand united with our communities and keep Pennsylvania moving forward.

### UWP Supports:

- 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.
- Reducing the housing and utility burden of families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Job training and career development, and workforce retention policies such as Employer Resource Networks (ERN).
- Workforce development initiatives that help more of Pennsylvania'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.
- 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. UWP also supports 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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