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**United Way
of Pennsylvania**

2023-2024 Policy Roadmap Summary:

Building Financially Resilient Families & Thriving Communities.

With no savings safety net and living paycheck-to-paycheck, ALICE families face significant financial burden with rising inflation and looming economic downturn. Over 1.3 million (27%) of Pennsylvania households struggle to afford the basic necessities of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a basic smartphone plan. ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families have income above the Federal Poverty Level, but struggle to afford the bare minimum cost of basic household needs. ALICE often does not qualify for assistance and are likely on emergency away from financial crisis. ALICE is in every Pennsylvania community and when combined with Pennsylvania households who live in poverty, nearly 2 million families are living below the ALICE Threshold which is a staggering 39% of Pennsylvania's population.

United Way recognizes the challenges facing many individuals and families throughout Pennsylvania who are going to work every day and still struggling to provide basic necessities for themselves and their families. United Ways are committed to breaking down the barriers to financial stability that many ALICE families face and will utilize the ALICE Survival Threshold as a roadmap to support our Pennsylvania communities. For a full description of the ALICE project, visit www.uwp.org/alice.

United Ways are in a unique position to develop meaningful and lasting cross-sector solutions to the challenges facing ALICE in our communities. Through the generosity of donors, United Ways are able to reduce the burdens ALICE encounters on a daily basis and collaborate through various partnerships to help ALICE move along their journey of financial stability.

United Way of Pennsylvania is a nonprofit and nonpartisan membership organization representing 43 member United Ways and 1 United Funds across the commonwealth. UWP supports the following public policy priorities to fight for the health, education and financial stability of ALICE in our Commonwealth:

PA 211: Measuring Need, Connecting Volunteers, & Assisting People in Need:

- Enhanced investments of state funds to continue a public-private partnership, strengthen PA 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.
- Leveraging PA 211's community data to help our state address social determinants of health and build resource coordination platforms.
- 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.

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

- State and federal Earned Income Tax Credits to support working families and reduce poverty. For every \$1 spent on a state Earned Income Tax Credit by the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania receives \$4 back in economic growth and saves \$3 dollars in social spending.
- Maintaining Pennsylvania's strong laws, which prohibit predatory lenders from taking advantage of individuals with limited to no income.

Ensuring Housing Stability and Preventing Displacement by Increasing Housing Affordability and Reducing Housing and Utility Burden:

- Improving Pennsylvania's housing infrastructure and 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 by supporting local solutions driven by the needs of Pennsylvania's geographically diverse communities.

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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

- 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 to prepare Pennsylvania's kids for high-demand, family sustaining jobs.

Supporting Accessible and Affordable Nutrition Programs for Individuals and Families:

- Protecting, strengthening, and increasing access to the Child Nutrition Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) will continue to be a priority.

Accessible and Affordable Transportation Helps Families Get to Work:

- Policies, programs, and infrastructure that break down transportation barriers for low-income individuals and families.
- Commonsense public policy solutions that do not hinder, impair, or restrict the ALICE population's ability to provide for their household.

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Affordable and Accessible Health Care for All Children and Families:

- 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 increasing maternal health access for expecting and new parents United Ways can achieve these goals.
- 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.
- Expanding access to vital and affordable health care programs including Medicaid and CHIP which provide all essential health benefits including behavioral health services.
- Implementing trauma informed practices and care that promote reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors for youth and families to break cycles of family and community trauma.

Technology is a Necessity that Connects Many Pennsylvanians to Essential Resources:

- Continuing investment in broadband and digital technology and build out broadband infrastructure that prioritizes "last mile" hardest-to-serve communities

Workforce Development and Building Financially Resilient Communities:

- 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.
- Ensure workers have skills necessary to access and succeed in good jobs that businesses need filled by investing in workforce development, job training and skill-building.
- 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.

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About United Way of Pennsylvania

United Way of Pennsylvania is a 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to champion United Way as a leader and partner in building more financially resilient families and thriving communities throughout Pennsylvania. United Way of Pennsylvania envisions an inclusive, impactful and collaborative network of United Ways working with business, community, faith and government leaders to advance equitable access to health, education and financial stability for all Pennsylvanians.

United Way is committed to raising charitable dollars that are invested in community impact work which addresses needs specific to the local community. In many cases, these funds support public-private partnerships that further leverage state taxpayer dollars.

United Way also commits to advocate for policy change which will help more Pennsylvania families and communities achieve the basic building blocks of a good quality of life in Pennsylvania. UWP is a membership organization which serves as the voice for 43 member United Ways and 1 United Funds across the Commonwealth.

For more information about United Way of PA's priorities, please contact:

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