



GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER.

United Way
of Pennsylvania

2023-2024 Policy Roadmap:
Building Financially Resilient
Families & Thriving Communities.

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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:

PA 211 is a one-stop connection for any Pennsylvanian to receive information and referral information for a multitude of health and human services needs. PA 211 is the place many turn to for help when they have never had to ask before and don't know where to turn. Each day, PA 211 is providing ALICE with resources to help alleviate barriers they are facing, such as food insecurity and high utility bills. From March 1, 2020, through December 31, 2021, the main stretch of the COVID-19 pandemic, PA 211 received over half a million call and text requests for a variety of supports and services. Further, PA 211 possesses the most comprehensive database statewide, containing over 38,000 available services. 211 is also the most efficient way for ALICE to find help with any needs among the day-to-day balancing of job, family, and financial obligations. It is also available 24/7/365 through guided web search, phone, and text allowing ALICE to better connect with the services they need when it is convenient for their schedule.



- 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

Rising inflation and extremely slow wage growth are contributing to already strained budgets for ALICE households. In addition, all economic indicators show the warning signs of a major economic downturn on the horizon. Prior to COVID-19, two out of five Pennsylvania households were struggling to make ends meet, and that number is surely set to rise in the next ALICE Report. Accordingly, the United Way network supports expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) including the creation of a state EITC that will benefit Pennsylvania families.

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.

As part of the 2022-23 Commonwealth budget, the General Assembly created the Pennsylvania Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit Program, which mirrors the federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. The PA CDCTC provides 30% of the federal credit, with the average benefit ranging from \$180 to \$360. In comparison, a state Earned Income Tax Credit, as proposed by UWP, would provide a benefit ranging from \$177 to \$606 depending on the rate.

UWP Supports

- 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:

Housing instability remains a sincere concern for many Pennsylvanians, including our ALICE population. United Ways and PA 211 continue to connect families with resources and information to help with housing and utility burden every day, but our systems are overloaded. We must work together to adequately fund PA 211 to support the increased demand for resources and information so that we may prevent many households from displacement. Housing is a significant expense for our ALICE population and many ALICE families are one emergency away from falling into poverty. Improving affordable housing options for low-income individuals and families and reducing utility burden is of great importance to United Ways.



UWP Supports

- 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

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. 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.

UWP Supports

United Way of PA serves as part of the Early Learning PA coalition that supports affordable and accessible child care and pre-k. A significant barrier to working families is lack of child care. Ensuring that families have access to affordable child care options give parents peace of mind while returning to work and supporting our economy.

- 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:

Food insecurity is on the rise as inflation increases and cost of basic essentials skyrocket. United Ways work with many community organizations and programs to solve community food need, but we must strengthen our investments in essential food programs to ensure that every Pennsylvanian has access to food.



UWP Supports

- 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.

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Accessible and Affordable Transportation Helps Families Get to Work:

United Way of Pennsylvania is committed to breaking down workforce barriers, such as lack of accessible and affordable transportation. In many communities across Pennsylvania, it can be very difficult to maintain a job without having sustainable transportation. Lack of accessible and affordable transportation options can cause many ALICE families to miss work or be unable to find work that is easily accessible.

UWP Supports

- 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:

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.

As we continue to recover and rebuild, all Pennsylvanians at every stage of their life must have access to healthcare coverage that is affordable and adequate. Inequities in the social determinants of health, such as poverty, living below the ALICE Threshold, and healthcare access continue to affect vulnerable communities. United Way of Pennsylvania is committed to equitable solutions that address these risk factors.

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 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:

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that access to broadband and digital technology is not a luxury, rather a necessity. Many ALICE households use mobile phones and data to connect to services such as PA 211 to connect with essential resources and information.



UWP Supports

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

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Workforce Development and Building Financially Resilient Communities:

United Ways are committed to supporting our workforce and accessing family sustaining incomes. The 2020 Pennsylvania ALICE report finds that lifting all Pennsylvania households above the ALICE Survival Threshold will add an estimated \$130.2 billion per year to Pennsylvania's GDP. Workforce development investments and strengthening our ALICE population on their journey to financial stability benefits our workforce and the PA economy.

UWP Supports

- 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.

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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