



2021 PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA of Texas United Ways for the 87th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature

Texas United Ways advocate for issues of critical importance to the communities they serve. With the advent of COVID-19, United Ways across the state quickly mobilized to provide supports to all Texans, especially ALICE and groups hit hardest by this pandemic. To ensure an inclusive recovery and the future success of our state, Texas United Ways are championing data-driven policies that address disparities in the areas of education, health, financial stability, and the nonprofit sector.

EDUCATION

Texas UWs believe that equitable educational opportunities should be available to all – children, youth, and adults – to ensure that we all reach our optimal potential, and that Texas has a strong workforce for years to come.

- Ensure equitable access to affordable, high-quality early and out of school care and education opportunities, especially for underserved communities.
- Strengthen efforts to effectively engage and support all caregivers in their roles as partners in learning and literacy from birth through adulthood.
- Strengthen previous improvements and efforts aimed at closing long-standing gaps in student outcomes among the state's low-income and communities of color.
- Support strategies and initiatives aimed at improving student health, emotional wellbeing, and academic outcomes.
- Strengthen pathways to college and career, including wraparound supports, to provide equitable access to postsecondary opportunities.



In addition, UWT will advocate for work-based learning; adult education and literacy; English Language Learners (ELL); mentoring; reducing absenteeism; elementary/middle school career development opportunities; career technical education; drop-out prevention strategies; and adequate funding for quality public education.

HEALTH

Texas UWs believe that all Texans should have access to equitable health services that protect and improve health and well-being among individuals and enhance measurable health outcomes of communities.

- Support promising and evidence-based practices that reduce abuse and neglect, toxic stress, improve maternal and child health, encourage positive parenting, and promote healthy child development and school readiness.
- Ensure access to comprehensive, equitable, and quality physical, mental, and behavioral health services, including substance use treatment.
- Ensure access to healthcare coverage as well as maintaining eligibility extensions provided as a result of COVID-19, such as telehealth, CHIP, and Medicaid for pregnant women.
- Address social determinants of health, such as housing instability and food insecurity, especially within healthcare delivery systems by leveraging 211, the statewide information and referral system.



In addition, UWT will advocate for targeted resources for special populations such as veterans, adolescents and young adults, and seniors; access to basic food and nutrition assistance; foster care improvements; prevention and intervention of trauma, including human trafficking and exploitation; and culturally and linguistically appropriate services (CLAS).

FINANCIAL STABILITY

Texas UWs believe that all families should have opportunities to achieve what we all want: good jobs with good wages, opportunities for workplace advancement, safe and affordable housing, and the resources and support needed to weather emergencies and make investments toward a bright future.

- Stabilize and strengthen the childcare industry as it is a critical workforce and an essential workforce support for parents and caregivers.
- Support for a continuum of services focused on ending homelessness and ensuring that all Texans have access to safe, affordable, and stable housing.
- Increase access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation options for underserved communities.
- Strengthen access to workforce education and training programs that provide wraparound services and align with quality, family-sustaining wage jobs.
- Support policies and practices that strengthen the financial health of all Texans, including responsible fair lending practices, financial literacy, credit repair, asset building, and access to banking.



In addition, UWT will support strategies to address middle skills; opportunity youth; adult-education; building of financial assets; and increased access to financial literacy education, savings, tax preparation and credits, and home ownership.

NON-PROFITS & COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

Texas UWs believe that strong communities and an adequately resourced and supported nonprofit sector are critical to ensuring an equitable and thriving Texas.

- Strengthen the capacity of nonprofits—especially organizations that serve and are led by historically underrepresented groups—to ensure they can continue to support all Texans and communities.
- Advance policies that strengthen the critical relationship between nonprofits and government at all levels, such as contracting data transparency and best practices, opportunities for public/private partnerships, and innovation and efficiencies.
- Bridge the digital divide and ensure digital inclusion for all communities—broadband, digital literacy, and technology/hardware.
- Ensure all Texans can continue to volunteer their time and contribute financially to our state’s nonprofit sector.
- Invest in Texas 211 and strengthen its ability to serve as a front door, connector, and data resource for critical community needs and services as needed.



In addition, UWT will advocate for public policies and state investments that strengthen data disaggregation to advance equity and inclusion; disaster response, recovery, and resiliency; equity and inclusion; criminal justice reform and successful reentry; and civic engagement.

UNITED for a future where all Texans thrive

About UWT:

As the voluntary state association for local United Ways in Texas, United Ways of Texas creates lasting change in peoples’ lives and in Texas communities by leading and collaborating with a trusted and powerful network of local member United Ways. UWT serves our member organizations and external partners with heartfelt passion, expertise, and a strong spirit of service. Together, our network is working collaboratively towards a future where all Texans thrive

For more information visit: uwtexas.org

About ALICE:

Asset Limited, Income Constrained (ALICE) is a population of Texans that are employed and yet struggle to afford the basic necessities of housing, food, health care, child care, technology and transportation. The Texas ALICE Report provides county-by-county level data and analysis of how many households are unable to make ends meet. The report includes measures, based on present-day income levels and expenses that show how many Texas workers are struggling financially, and why.

For more information: unitedforalicetx.org

