

“*To strengthen the capacity of United Ways to be leaders in achieving results that improve the lives of all New Yorkers.”*

**2019 Public Policy & State Budget Priorities**

Over the last few years New York has implemented policies aimed at helping citizens achieve a living wage, afford child care, and obtain quality health care. While these policies have started to have an impact, individuals in every community across the state still struggle. New York is a state rich in resources and while there is a robust network of public and private programs and services, a number of those dedicated to low income individuals, barriers exist and often it is difficult for connectivity between the two. With thousands of services available, people still struggle to find the right kind of help when they need it. Government programs and departments are essential but helping families and individuals to achieve success requires information, resources and strategies that must occur at all levels: local, regional and statewide.

United Ways across the state work to address critical community needs and support the building blocks for good quality of life for all: health, education, and financial stability. During 2018, United Ways Across New York State:

* Invested over $32 million in resources primarily focused on access to health, childhood success, youth success or economic mobility.
* Helped over 20,000 children achieve developmental milestones, obtain literacy support, or enroll in high-quality child care.
* Served over 100,000 youth in out of school programs, developing soft skills, receiving job training, and avoiding risky behaviors (e.g., alcohol, drug abuse, unprotected sexual activity).
* Leveraged over $66 million in federal tax returns to individuals/families through VITA and/or MyFreeTaxes.

*Source: 2018 Global Results Data*

United Way of New York State (UWNYS) has engaged in a number of exciting initiatives that, in conjunction with the work in local communities, provides a basis for our 2019 Public Policy & State Budget Priorities. Priority requests include:

* $1.5 million investment in the state budget to maintain and expand 2-1-1.
* Expanding and strengthening New York’s working family tax credits
  + Expand the Empire State Child Credit to cover children under 4
  + Increase from 30% to 40% federal credit paid to families under the EITC
  + Double the amount of child care expenses creditable under the CDCTC
* Increasing access to high-quality, affordable child care.
* Supporting the state’s Prevention Agenda including livability for age-friendly communities.

**2-1-1: A Solution**

2-1-1 is a statewide free and confidential health and human service referral hotline that is operated by 2-1-1 New York which is affiliated with United Way of New York State. 2-1-1 is accessible 24 hours a day/365 days of the year, and enables residents to be connected with a trained operator who evaluates the callers’ needs, accesses a database that contains information on over 69,000 programs and 29,000 organizations across NYS, and refers them to the best possible solution. 2-1-1 provides information on the work of public agencies and private organizations in the fields of social services, public health, law enforcement, homeland security and emergency services, legal assistance, corrections, temporary and disability services, and more.

New Yorkers are using 2-1-1 every day. In the first three quarters of 2018, 1.3 million phone calls were made to 2-1-1. In addition, the 2-1-1 website saw over 15 million hits.

But 2-1-1 is more than a telephone number. Over its 15-year history, the 2-1-1 system has created local partnerships, as well as partnerships with the state, to leverage the system and ensure that New Yorkers have access to the information and referrals when they need it most. For example:

* **2-1-1 Contributes to Disaster Planning, Relief and Recovery Efforts.** During Hurricane Sandy, Tropical Storm Lee, the Oneida/Herkimer County flooding, Western New York snowstorms, and other disasters, 2-1-1 provided access to reliable, up-to-date, relevant information for those impacted, first responders, and long-term recovery groups. In many counties, 2-1-1 is recognized as a member of disaster operations for training, exercises, and response. FEMA promotes 2-1-1 as the number to call for information and referral.
* **2-1-1 Helps our Fiscally-Strapped Counties.** Several local DSSs use 2-1-1 for call routing and pre-screening, and to provide after-hours on-call services for adult/child protective and homeless/food emergencies. For Monroe and Onondaga Counties, 2-1-1 operators are the first point of contact for the homeless shelters and services.
* **2-1-1 is Partnering with the State in Healthcare Reform.** 2-1-1 is participating regionally in DSRIP, from providing an enhanced comprehensive directory of services, to providing client intake and screening and coordinating discharge planning and follow-up calls. In several counties, 2-1-1 is working with health care providers and transportation/mobility managers to meet patients’ transportation needs for follow-up appointments. 2-1-1 can provide assistance by phone or text-message with assessing needs and connecting people with services.

Making full use of the infrastructure of 2-1-1 can enhance a broad range of programs, improving effectiveness and lowering costs, while offering a simplified process for the public. Continued state support for 2-1-1 will have lasting and far-reaching benefit. We are just beginning to realize its potential.

**Request: $1.5 million investment in the SFY 19-20 budget to maintain and expand access to 2-1-1.** As a public-private partnership, it is critical for state support to be maintained. Without state support, the partnership and opportunities that we have built with the state, local counties, and residents will be in jeopardy.

**ALICE Report: Asset, Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**

In 2016, UWNYS commissioned a report that studied the number of employed individuals and families across the State who were above the poverty level, but still struggled to make ends meet - a population that the report refers to as “ALICE” (Asset, Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). Last fall, UWNYS released an updated ALICE Report that shows New Yorkers still face financial hardship despite increases in employment and median income. ALICE is the single mother who needs assistance with child care. ALICE is the father who is facing eviction. ALICE is the veteran who is facing legal problems as a result of active duty or having difficulty re-assimilating into the community.

The updated report shows that over the last few years, the economy has rebounded and the state has made investments to assist those living in poverty. However, there is still a large number of New Yorkers, **3.2 million, or 45% of the overall population**, that cannot afford the basic needs and lack sufficient income and resources to pay for housing, food, child care, transportation, and health care. The report continues to show that ALICE lives in every part of the state, from our biggest cities to our most rural areas.

Other key findings from the report include:

* In order to meet the ALICE threshold for survival, a 4-person household (2 adults, 1 infant, 1 preschooler), needs an annual income of **$68,808 or $34.40 per hour**. An individual needs an annual income of **$23,148 or $11.57 per hour**. This is 7% higher for single and 9% higher for the 4-person household compared to the report in 2016.
* 51% of all jobs in NYS pay less than $20/hour or $40,000 annually for full-time work. Even working multiple jobs often does not provide sufficient income to meet the ALICE threshold.
* All but one of New York’s 62 counties has 30% or more households earning less than what is needed to afford a basic household budget.

**Request: Expanding and strengthening New York’s working family tax credits**. Specifically,

* Expand the state’s child tax credit (Empire State Child Credit) to cover children under age four and double the credit for young children.
* Expand and strengthen the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit by increasing the percentage of the federal credit paid to families from 30% to 40%; and expanding the credit for young adults without children (under age 25) who are currently ineligible for either the federal or state credit.
* Double the amount of child care expenses creditable under the state’s Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) to better reflect the true cost of care and enable more middle-income families to afford high-quality child care.

**Request: Increase workforce development, including training programs and access to jobs with higher wages.** While NYS has taken a great first step by increasing the minimum wage, NYS can help those working to gain the skills needed to prepare them for higher paying jobs, in industries that are in demand across the state. By preparing individuals for these types of jobs, NYS can continue to move the needle and ensure that individuals are able to obtain the financial support they need to afford the basic cost of living while further enhancing our economy.

**Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI)**

Governor Cuomo created the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI) to develop local task forces in sixteen communities across the state with high poverty rates. In 9 of these 16 communities, the local United Way has been leading the local ESPRI effort based on their experience as convener in the community and their efforts to reduce poverty.

Although in different stages, these ESPRI task forces are working to identify high-need areas and develop recommendations for investments and other changes to reduce the number of individuals living in poverty. With the collective input of United Way led ESPRI areas, we once again see a number of areas of synergy for public policy.

**Request: Increase access to high-quality, affordable child care.** It is critical that working families have access to high quality, affordable childcare. While a number of ESPRI regions are looking at this in more detail, UWNYS continues to advocate for increasing access and affordability of childcare, as well as expansions of important tax credits previously mentioned.

**Request: Continue to provide educational supports for school aged youth.** Programs that support early learning, ensure grade-level reading and encourage college and career readiness are critical to breaking the generational cycle of poverty.

**New York State Prevention Agenda**

UWNYS supports the Governor’s Executive Order that directs state agencies to include the New York State Prevention Agenda priorities and the AARP/World health Organization eight domains of livability for age-friendly communities, where appropriate, into federal and state plans, and agency policies, procedure, and procurements. These policies will help ensure both our younger and older citizens receive the health and social supports they need to thrive.

Prevention Agenda:

* Prevent Chronic Disease
* Promote a Healthy and Safe Environment
* Promote Health Woman, Infants and Children
* Promote Mental Health and Prevent Substance Abuse

8 Domains of Livability:

* Outdoor spaces and buildings
* Transportation
* Housing
* Social participation
* Respect and social inclusion
* Civic participation and employment
* Communication and information
* Community and health services