



## 2019 Advocacy Platform

For over 80 years United Way of Frederick County (UWFC) has fought for the health, education and financial stability of every person in our community. In Frederick County today, 39% of households struggle to afford the basic household necessities. These households are one step away from spiraling into poverty.

[The ALICE Report for Maryland](#) has changed the way that UWFC thinks about community needs. ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) shows the true baseline cost of living of each county in Maryland. Frederick County has the highest ALICE survival threshold of any jurisdiction in Maryland. This means that it costs more to afford the combined annual cost of basic housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and other necessities for working individuals in Frederick County than in any other county in Maryland. Based on these and other compelling needs, UWFC has compiled this 2019 Advocacy Platform\*.

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### **Make more affordable housing options available**

UWFC supports creative and effective programs and projects that will work to resolve Frederick County's affordable housing crisis. According to the [Frederick County Affordable Housing Needs Assessment](#), the county is 5,700 affordable units short of meeting current demand even if the over 300 housing units in the construction pipeline are completed. The need is urgent: 49% of renters and 22% of owners spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing, leaving little to cover all other expenses. UWFC also advocates that in future years, competitive affordable housing tax credits through the state Qualified Allocation Plan be directed to Frederick County as a "Community of Opportunity".

### **Provide access to a 24-hour detox facility for residents in crisis**

UWFC supports the recommendation of the Frederick County Health Department's Local Health Improvement Plan to provide immediate and adequate access to detox services for Frederick County residents in crisis. Our communities continue to struggle with a national public health emergency of opiate abuse. Despite progress made introducing Naloxone to reduce the number of deaths by opiate overdoses in Frederick County, there has been a disturbing increase in deaths by overdose of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl (from two in 2013 to over 50 in 2018). We applaud Frederick County government for dedicating \$500,000 towards the establishment of a detox center, and recommend that the state government also financially support this much needed service beyond the \$200,000 already committed through the county health department.

### **Set education as a top priority for public investment**

UWFC supports preparing students to meet the challenges of a changing global economy, to meet the State's workforce needs, to be ready for post-secondary education and the workforce, and to be successful students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This includes: expanding the availability of full day pre-school for three to four year-olds at no or reduced cost to ALICE households; growing career and technology education (CTE) for high school students; fully funding increases in special education programs and services; budgeting for better-trained teachers and staff, counselors, therapists, and social workers, moving towards smaller class sizes to ensure student's progress; and providing student access to mental health services that are vital to school safety.

### **Change child welfare laws to best care for unaccompanied homeless youth**

UWFC supports providing immediate shelter to unaccompanied, homeless minor-age children. In the [2018 Youth REACH Maryland Survey Count](#) Frederick County had the fifth largest number of unaccompanied homeless youth. Child welfare laws need to allow the best care possible. Sheltering these highly vulnerable youth will ensure they are supported while they complete their public education, and give them the best opportunity to thrive.

### **Increase access to affordable transportation options in rural areas**

UWFC supports increased bus routes to Emmitsburg, Thurmont and Brunswick, communities with some of the highest ALICE percentages in the county. More transportation options would allow these households to explore new employment and education opportunities, take advantage of public support mechanisms, support the needs of the growing senior population and receive needed medical care. Most of the services and employment opportunities in the county are near the city of Frederick, putting them out of reach for people without private transportation. We also recommend that the county pilot program providing mid-day service between Emmitsburg, Thurmont and Frederick be restored, made permanent, and expanded to service five days a week.

### **Expand eligibility for Maryland's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for single workers and increase the credit for workers not claiming dependents**

UWFC supports increasing the income threshold to \$23,000 for single filers and increasing the state's EITC to 100% of the Federal EITC for filers not claiming dependents. These policies would provide an average benefit of \$375 to thousands of working ALICE households.

### **Promote participation in the 2020 Census**

UWFC values the importance of collecting census data that accurately reflects our local population. This information is necessary to identify underserved communities and to allow nonprofit and governmental agencies to take the most effective and deliberate actions. Additionally, reliable census data ensures that all subsequent reports and analysis produce accurate conclusions. UWFC's goal is to empower communities towards a high response rate and to encourage questionnaire completion. To best achieve this, we recommend that local and state government work closely with nonprofits to maximize participation in the 2020 Census.

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\*UWFC advocacy positions include, but are not limited to, those listed on this platform.