



2020 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 unexpected expense away from spiraling into poverty.

[The ALICE Report for Frederick County](#) has changed the way that UWFC approaches community needs and works to solve them. ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, and Employed) shows the true baseline cost of living of each county in Maryland. The report shows that it costs more to afford the combined annual cost of basic housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and other necessities in Frederick County than in any other county in Maryland. Based on these and other compelling needs, UWFC has compiled this 2020 Advocacy Platform.

Make more affordable housing options available

In Frederick County, 49% of renters and 22% of owners spend more than 30% of their monthly income on housing, leaving little to cover other expenses and savings. UWFC supports programs and projects that will work to resolve Frederick County's affordable housing crisis. This should include efforts to increase affordable housing inventory for seniors. UWFC supports legislation to include Frederick County with the four other Maryland counties who have the flexibility to adopt a local elderly and disabled renter's tax credit. UWFC also advocates for the expansion of homebuyer assistance programs to include teachers, city and county workers to purchase homes in Frederick County.

Support and expand positive public health outcomes in substance abuse recovery

Our communities struggle with the national public health emergency of opiate and drug abuse. UWFC continues to recommend that Frederick County increase access to recovery programs for residents in crisis. We encourage the consideration of best practices including the implementation of peer support groups in all substance abuse recovery programs throughout the county. UWFC supports the exploration of data-driven solutions that improve the health of vulnerable populations, including needle exchange programs.

Set education as a top priority for public investment

There are currently 19 schools in Frederick County near or exceeding capacity. UWFC supports efforts to increase school safety and capacity. We also advocate for investment in programs aimed at workforce education and training that will ensure that graduating high school students are equipped with the necessary skills. UWFC also supports continued efforts to eliminate the achievement gap in Frederick County Public Schools.

Change child welfare laws to best care for unaccompanied homeless youth

Frederick County has the fifth largest number of unaccompanied homeless youth in the Maryland. UWFC supports providing shelter to unaccompanied, homeless minor-age children. Sheltering highly vulnerable youth will ensure they are supported while they complete their education. UWFC also supports the purpose of the State Workgroup to Study Shelter and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Minors.

Increase access to affordable transportation options

Parts of the City of Frederick, Emmitsburg, Thurmont and Brunswick have some of the highest ALICE percentages in the county. More transportation options would allow these residents 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. Expansion of transit services should include adding a stop to the Emmitsburg Thurmont Shuttle route at the new health center opening at Mount St. Mary's campus, while looking for other opportunities to provide transportation options in rural areas.

Ensure that the \$200,000 appropriation for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) remains in the FY21 state budget

The VITA program assists hundreds of Frederick County ALICE households each year with tax services and brings back over a million dollars in refunds to the community. The General Assembly approved expansion of the VITA program, but the Governor did not approve release of FY20 funds for the program. A separate bill passed into law requires that the Governor include \$200,000 in the state budget for VITA moving forward. We strongly encourage our County Delegation to ensure that the full VITA funding remains in the FY21 budget so the free VITA income tax program can help even more ALICE households. Every dollar invested by the state results in an additional four federal and privately-invested dollars in expanding VITA.

Increase the supply and accessibility of quality child care for families

Finding quality child care is a challenge for families with nontraditional work hours and irregular work schedules, families in underserved areas, middle-income families, families of children with disabilities, and families for whom English is not the home language. UWFC advocates for policies that support solutions. UWFC also supports exploring options that can increase the availability of infant and toddler care and maximize the quality of care.

Increase support for veteran services and improve data on veteran needs

Veterans face many health, housing and financial stability challenges. UWFC supports projects, programs, and activities that serve the veteran population in Frederick County. Increased funding for local programs will improve health, education, and financial stability outcomes for veterans and their families.

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