



2022 Advocacy Platform

For nearly 85 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, 37% of households struggle to afford the basic household necessities. These households are one unexpected expense away from spiraling into poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact, financial and otherwise, on ALICE households. We are now more concerned than ever before about their future financial stability.

[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 provides critical information about how financial stability is spread across Frederick County demographics.

The [COVID-19 Impact Survey](#) provides a snapshot of the current impact of the pandemic on ALICE. Survey results show that it is an increasing challenge for ALICE families to afford the combined annual cost of basic needs (child care, education, food, health care, housing, transportation) and other necessities in Frederick County. We are especially concerned for senior, single mother, Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latinx populations, and those with military service history. These groups are over-represented in our ALICE population, and are negatively impacted disproportionately by the pandemic. Based on these and other compelling needs, UWFC has compiled this 2022 Advocacy Platform.

Ensure continued access to the COVID-19 and flu vaccines as well as testing and access to future vaccines to reduce negative impacts and spread of disease.

It is vital that all members of the Frederick community have equitable access to vaccines, including the COVID-19 and flu vaccines, especially for those with limited income to pay for medical costs. UWFC also supports equitable access to fast and accurate COVID-19 testing, contact tracing for Frederick County residents, and transportation for eligible residents to receive these vaccines.

Support the basic needs of all Frederick County residents.

The ALICE Report shows that access to basic needs (child care, education, food, health care, housing, transportation) can be a challenge for ALICE households. The COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated these needs. We support the establishment of an efficient and coordinated network of supports to ensure that basic needs of residents are met. More specifically, UWFC supports the efficient and coordinated distribution of food to ensure that nobody goes hungry. We support programs and projects that will resolve Frederick County's affordable housing crisis, including eviction and foreclosure abatement. We support more transportation options which would allow rural residents to explore new employment and

education opportunities and take advantage of public supports. Expanded transportation options would also serve the needs of the growing senior population, so they may obtain medical care and avoid the detriments of social isolation. Additionally, we believe the City of Frederick should align its Accessory Dwelling Units policy with that of Frederick County. We support the expansion of homebuyer assistance programs to include teachers, and city and county workers so they may purchase homes in Frederick County.

Increase the supply and accessibility of quality childcare for families.

Childcare cost is a leading financial stressor for ALICE households. Availability of quality and affordable childcare was a challenge even before the pandemic and has become even more so during it. We are concerned for parents with school aged children who must work while schools operate in various formats, including hybrid, virtual, or other formats that prevents school-age children from being in school all day. We support increased funding for childcare providers to increase their capacity and ability to remain open, and encourage continued collaboration between providers and Frederick County Public Schools to consider convenient childcare solutions for ALICE families.

Increase the availability to broadband access to remove barriers to online learning and telehealth for Frederick County residents and students.

UWFC's education priority during the COVID-19 pandemic is to remove barriers to students' ability to access online learning platforms. This includes access to broadband, software and hardware, but also direct support of students to maintain academic progress and to eliminate achievement gaps. 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 for immediate entry into the workforce and/or successful ongoing education towards employment. Furthermore, UWFC recognizes that the increased need for individuals and families to have broadband access to utilize post-secondary online learning platforms, access job opportunities and other basic necessities, and access telehealth, teletherapy, and other opportunities to ensure the physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing for residents.

Continue support for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) in the state budget.

The VITA program assists hundreds of Frederick County ALICE households each year with tax services and brings critical refunds back to the community. Every \$1 invested by Maryland in VITA results in an additional \$4 from federal and private sources for expanding VITA. Many VITA volunteers and clients are in high-risk population groups for COVID-19. It will be important to ensure Frederick County households continue to have access to VITA despite needed adaptations that will have to be made. State funding is critical for the continuation of VITA.

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