



2023 ADVOCACY PLATFORM

The Need

Since 1938, the United Way of Frederick County (UWFC) has set and achieved ambitious goals, fighting for the health, education, and financial stability of households in need in Frederick County. Our mission is to mobilize the caring power of our whole community to improve lives.

In 2017, UWFC released a groundbreaking report documenting a large segment of the population as **ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed**. This report showed a significant economic disparity between households, especially in communities of color, throughout Frederick County. In fact, ALICE households have incomes above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but well below the true cost of living in our community. For example, in 2020, the FPL for a family of four was \$26,200. In contrast, according to UWFC's ALICE Report, the annual survival budget for a two-parent household with two young children in Frederick County was \$104,760. This survival budget accounts only for bare-minimum monthly expenses such as rent and food. It does not account for building assets or savings, or home and auto repairs. It also does not account for unexpected emergencies or illnesses. The next ALICE report will likely be released in 2023 and include some measure Covid-19's impact on our neighbors in need.

In Frederick today, **at least 37% of all households struggle to afford basic household necessities**, falling below the survival budget threshold, because the cost of living outpaces wage increases. ALICE families are often forced to choose between paying for food, medical expenses, childcare, broadband access, healthcare, and rent. These 35,484 households are just one unexpected expense away from spiraling into, or further into, poverty. Following the enormous impact of Covid-19 on our ALICE families, we are still more concerned than ever about their future financial stability. ALICE families are still feeling a disparate impact.

The ALICE Report for Frederick County has changed the way that UWFC approaches community needs and works to solve them. The report provides critical information about how financial stability is spread across Frederick County demographics, including our communities of color.

UWFC believes that everyone – regardless of where they started or ended up – should have the opportunity to be great. Sometimes the only thing a person needs to turn things around is the opportunity to do so. Through investment in evidence-based solutions, UWFC invests in the outcomes those solutions provide and, in turn, the people the new opportunities enable.

Furthermore, we oppose all forms of discrimination and actively strive to be a model of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Our entire team proudly reflects the Frederick County community in its many faces, cultures, and walks of life. We embrace each person's social or economic status, sex, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, and physical or mental abilities. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure that all voices are valued and heard. In supporting our 2023 Advocacy Platform, we welcome you to join us as we drive toward social justice by embracing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for every person in every community by supporting and advocating on behalf of ALICE families.

Our Initiatives

I. Transportation Access

UWFC is calling this year the Year of Transportation for Frederick County. With so many of our Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families struggling to afford the cost of basic necessities, including transportation, UWFC supports our existing transportation systems and advocates for the development of new and complimentary transportation solutions. We're convinced that transportation is the key to many other positive outcomes for ALICE families.

II. Broadband Access and Digital Inclusion and Equity

Providing access to highspeed internet, implementing programs to expand digital literacy, and expanding digital opportunities are a must. UWFC works to ensure that ALICE households will have access to broadband services, regardless of their ZIP code. We are a proponent of federal, state, and local governmental programs which aim to shrink the digital divide.

III. Access to Services for Veterans and Those Who Have Served our Nation

UWFC proudly stands by initiatives that support those who have served, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, etc. We also advocate for more accurate data collection by the U.S. Census Bureau for veterans who have been historically undercounted, including (but not limited to) people experiencing homelessness, people of color, individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, and people in low-income and hard-to-count geographic areas.

IV. Access to Financial Literacy and Asset Building Tools

Using a collective impact model, UWFC's Prosperity Center employs a holistic, integrated approach to improving ALICE households' financial security. The Prosperity Center functions as a one-stop hub giving community members access to a wide range of services, including pathways to homeownership, independent transportation, and career advancement. Since 1938, UWFC has fought hard for our neighbors in need. We will tirelessly continue to do so.

V. Affordable Housing

UWFC is in favor of initiatives which promote construction of affordable rental units and homes for sale, including mixed-use, high-density housing, and land trust housing. These types of housing are ideal for ALICE households including veterans, working families, seniors, and those struggling with disabilities.

VI. Access to Healthcare and Vaccines

We encourage legislative plans which support ongoing and improved access to healthcare services, including all immunizations for all ages. Since Covid is likely here to stay, we support continued access to vaccines, testing, and at-home test kits. With the onset of Mpox and other circulating diseases, new systems must also be developed to ensure that ALICE households have continued access to quality healthcare, immunizations, and health information at the same rate as their wealthier neighbors, regardless of their ability to pay.