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UNITED WAY

# POLICY PRIORITIES FOR THE 118<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

**United Way works to create equitable, practical, long-term solutions that drive community change.** Our strength as an organization is our ability to leverage the collective voice of the United Way Network to promote policies that ensure everyone has the chance to reach their fullest potential. United Way's policy priorities for the 118th Congress - informed by the work of more than one thousand local United Ways around the country - are rooted in advancing racial and economic equity and opportunity, fostering cross-sector collaboration and problem-solving, promoting civic engagement and democracy, and growing our potential for impact. The United Way Network will advocate for the following federal policy priorities that will advance the common good in communities across the country.



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## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

### **IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF HEALTHCARE COVERAGE FOR ALL AMERICANS:**

- Increasing funding for Affordable Care Act (ACA) outreach and enrollment, including targeted outreach to communities of color to close accessibility gaps
- Safeguarding consumer protections and essential health benefits to ensure healthcare coverage is adequate to address all healthcare needs
- Protecting and maintaining a robust Medicaid program, and supporting Medicaid expansion to support low to moderate income working families

### **PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS (SUDS):**

- Ensuring robust funding for Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) programs and 988 to address increased mental health challenges faced by individuals as a result of the pandemic and economic crisis
- Increasing dedicated federal resources for states and local communities to address substance use disorders
- Promoting trauma informed care initiatives to support the mental health needs of children

### **CREATING SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES:**

- Ensuring communities are safe, violence-free, and healthy environments where children, families, and everyone can thrive
- Protecting children and vulnerable individuals from threats to their well-being, including all forms of human trafficking

## EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE

### PROMOTING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY CHILDCARE FOR WORKING FAMILIES:

- Increasing Child Care Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) funding

### ENSURING ALL FAMILIES HAVE HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION OPTIONS:

- Increasing federal investments in early childhood education to provide training, certification, and equitable compensation for childhood education workers
- Supporting increased access to high-quality early learning opportunities via Early Head Start, Head Start, and state-sponsored Pre-K programs

### ENSURING ALL CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO K-12 EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT SET THEM UP FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS:

- Supporting teacher training and parent engagement programs
- Increasing Title I funding for K-12 schools in high-poverty communities
- Strengthening student supports, including mentorship programs, tutoring, addressing learning loss, counseling, equitable access to digital technology, and more
- Promoting community schools as an effective wraparound model for students and families to receive educational and other important services and resources

### SUPPORTING ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION OPTIONS THAT LEAD TO GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT AND INCREASED PROFESSIONAL MOBILITY:

- Improving the affordability of high-impact post-secondary educational programs
- Increasing access to career pathways programs that partner with post-secondary institutions





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## ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### **STRENGTHENING TAX CREDITS AND TAX ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT WORKERS AND FAMILIES:**

- Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) by increasing the size of the credit and expanding the age range for eligible workers
- Making the Child Tax Credit fully refundable and fully available to the lowest income workers and families with children
- Fully funding the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program to increase its capacity to serve local communities

### **SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Increasing investments in the nation's workforce development system, including programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), national service programs, apprenticeships, the Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, that are designed to serve adults, dislocated workers, and opportunity youth
- Expanding incentivized sector-based strategies that help meet employer demand for a more educated and skilled workplace

### **INCREASING HOUSING ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY:**

- Expanding and strengthening programs that directly address homelessness in our communities
- Increasing funding for programs that provide broader housing options for lower-income Americans, including public housing
- Ensuring national housing policy actively supports inclusion, actively roots out discrimination, and promotes housing affordability, especially for the most vulnerable



## COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

### **SUPPORTING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A ROBUST NONPROFIT SECTOR:**

- Increasing the nonitemizer or universal charitable deduction to at least \$4600/\$9200
- Supporting individual and corporate giving tax incentives for charitable giving to nonprofits

### **SUPPORTING STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS IN 211, THE COMMUNITY CONNECTION TO KEY FEDERAL, STATE, NONPROFIT, AND FRONTLINE RESOURCES:**

- Investing federal funds to fully operate 211 in every state at increased capacity through the HELP Act and funding the data and technology infrastructure to create a national database of community needs
- Increasing investments in 211's disaster recovery services through partnerships with government agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

### **SUPPORTING RESILIENT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO RESOURCES THAT PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:**

- Supporting federal funding to expand broadband and device access through infrastructure investments and affordability supports for low- income families
- Ensuring equitable access to energy efficiency resources, tax credits, and subsidies that promote environmental sustainability
- Advancing the development of local infrastructure that supports community prosperity and mitigates the impacts of pollution, especially in historically disadvantaged communities
- Strengthening the breadth and quality of transportation options available to workers and families, including high quality public transportation

### **STRENGTHENING DISASTER RESPONSE FUNDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE, WITH A FOCUS ON HARDEST HIT COMMUNITIES:**

- Increasing funding for equitable and accessible disaster response programs, including the Emergency Food and Shelter Program
- Bolstering support for disaster preparedness and mitigation programs, with a focus on increased cross-sector coordination
- Ensuring funds are available to address disasters where and when they occur

