



United Ways of Washington State

2022-2023 State Legislative Framework

United Ways of the Pacific Northwest represents 20 local United Ways in Washington working every day to mobilize the caring power of communities to advance the common good and improve lives. This challenging time makes our mission even more relevant and essential.

As our [ALICE report](#) demonstrates, 43 percent of Washington households were already struggling to pay bills before COVID hit. Low and moderate family incomes have not kept up in the past decade with the costs of housing, child care, health care and the other life necessities. Racial inequality is strongly manifested across all elements of the ALICE research. We strongly advocate for public and private investments that **ensure economic recovery strongly benefits ALL residents.**

2022 SESSION - Ensure Equitable Economic Recovery & Support for Struggling Families & Individuals

The COVID crisis has exacerbated the economic instability of those without secure, protected jobs. Yet these people are performing critical jobs at the lower ends of our economy, raising families and often doing it without secure wages and benefits. Here is what the Legislature can do:

- **Supplemental budget funding to build on the great success of the bipartisan Working Families Tax Credit by ensuring eligible families have ample access to information about the credit.**
- **Adequate funding for quality broadband access across the state.**
- **Support the recovery and sustainability of child care workers and early learning businesses by enacting the requests of the Early Learning Action Alliance.** [Link to be added]
- **Boost acquisition and development of emergency and Permanent Supportive Housing and allied services through the use of \$815 million surplus state and one-time federal funds.**
- **Pass [House Bill 2068](#) to codify Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library in Washington.**
- **State funding to match private contributions for the Washington state [ALICE report](#).**

MOVING FORWARD

As the [ALICE report](#) potently describes, the “old normal” pre-COVID economy was not working for our state’s low- and moderate-income families. We must take serious steps to ensure income and racial justice and equity. To change this trajectory, we must take these actions moving forward toward 2023 and beyond:

- **Increase Access, Affordability, and Quality of Child Care and Early Learning for Working Families**

The 2021 Fair Start Act is an incredible step forward for early learning and child care.

- The Legislature should continue to ensure that the Fair Start Act and new state and federal investments are implemented in the best ways possible for families and providers.
- Pass [House Bill 2068](#) will codify Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Washington. The Imagination Library is currently being expanded statewide by the United Ways of the Pacific Northwest through a one-time \$2.3 million grant from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The bill will enable state matching funds to support the goal of ensuring that over 60 percent of households with children birth to five receive monthly books through the mail to improve kindergarten readiness.

- **Increase Access to Affordable Housing and Invest in Solutions to the Homeless Public Health Crisis**

Housing is the most expensive and important monthly household expense. Yet affordable housing was already in short supply before the virus hit. People and communities continue to suffer the ravages of homelessness. Racial inequity in home ownership is starkly different for white compared to black and brown families. Despite historical 2021 investments, more resources are needed to solve this complex challenge.

- Provide policy and resource incentives to boost the creation of more affordable housing by public, private and nonprofit sectors.
- Ensure adequate permanent supported housing including resources such as behavioral health services for people impacted by chronic homelessness.
- Ensure ongoing historical increases in the Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve affordable housing across the state.

- **Create a statewide disaster fund account so our state and regions are prepared for our new normal of wildfires, floods and other natural events.**

- Support and incentivize local and regional funding pools and preparedness

- **Ensure Efficient Access to Human Services and Resources by Fully Funding the 2-1-1 Call System.**

Washington 211 has demonstrated its importance as part of Washington's emergency response and in ensuring efficient use of our social service infrastructure. Total call volume exceeded 637,000 this last year -- more than doubling from the year before which in turn was a 50 percent increase from the previous year.