2022 Advocacy Priorities Agenda

Educational outcomes are inherently connected to economic mobility and access to affordable, quality health care. United Way of the Piedmont (UWP) recognizes upstream causes of educational opportunity gaps in Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union Counties. In advocacy efforts, UWP remains non-partisan and issue focused. Those most closely impacted by an issue or policy will be active participants in our advocacy work to transform our community into a place for everyone to thrive, from cradle to career and beyond.

Explanation of Advocacy Roles

Advocacy takes many forms and is an ongoing process. United Way of the Piedmont and its staff may utilize one or several of the following advocacy roles on an issue-to-issue basis.

Lead - United Way of the Piedmont takes a high-level leadership role to educate legislators, partners, and community members on an issue with a clear policy position. Policies where we take a leadership role will be feasible, non-partisan, and move towards systems change. Staff dedicate time, resources, and capacity to support research, advocacy efforts, and partner mobilization efforts. Internal networks will be engaged for additional support and external partners may be engaged with action items.

Advocate - United Way of the Piedmont will have a clear policy stance at this level and bring visibility to an issue. Work will be focused on educating and empowering the community on an issue. United Way may join coalitions at this level to advance policy and advocacy work. Staff provide educational materials, research, and actively track policy updates relating to the issue area.

Support - Advocacy at this level entails lending our organization’s name to sign-on letters, sharing information and data, and supporting other organizations. We will lean on those leading the work in the issue area and will be advised on how to utilize resources and social or political capital.

Monitor - We recognize that some issues outside of our purview of outlined priorities or mission will directly impact our work. United Way of the Piedmont will monitor bills and issues that directly or indirectly impact health, education, or economic mobility. We may or may not take a stance but will utilize available resources to track legislation and efforts of those organizing on the issue.

United Way of the Piedmont's Community Impact Goals

Economic Mobility and Basic Needs

Individuals and families in our community should be able to meet basic needs and build financial stability. This includes having a coordinated, navigable safety net of emergency support services, increasing access to financial resources necessary to be self-sufficient, and having knowledge and access to use resources in a manner that supports self-sufficiency. Our goal is to decrease the number of community members living below self-sufficiency by 11,000.

Education

Children, youth, and adults should have access to quality education that supports academic and social success. This includes readiness for success when entering kindergarten, matriculating successfully through K-12 education to high school graduation, and furthering education through vocational training, technical education, or college. Our goal is to set children up for success from cradle to career to increase economic mobility through educational attainment.

Access to Healthcare and Safe Environments

Members of our community should have the knowledge, resources, and opportunities to live healthy, safe, and active lives. This includes living in safe environments, having access to basic health care resources including quality primary and behavioral health care, and increasing infrastructure for, and access to, culturally appropriate preventative health and wellness. Our goal is to increase access to affordable health care and to combat the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on children and adults in our community.
CRITERIA FOR SELECTING POLICY PRIORITIES

☐ Does the policy address social, economic, educational, or health outcomes in Spartanburg, Union, and, or Cherokee Counties?

☐ Is the policy nonpartisan and issue focused?

☐ Does this policy promote equity, address opportunity gaps and structural barriers, or expand access to economic mobility, education, or health care?

☐ Is there a feasible pathway for enacting, paying for, and implementing the policy?

☐ Will those closest to the issue be better off if this policy is enacted? How so?

☐ Are there other community partners working on this policy?

☐ Is a member of the Spartanburg, Union, or Cherokee Delegation likely to meet about this issue?

☐ Does the issue fall outside of the UWP scope, but directly impact our work?

ADVOCACY PRIORITIES IN 2022

Early Childhood Education and Childcare

Lead
- Share Kindergarten readiness data from Early Development Instrument to drive practices
- Prepare to Thrive initiative

Advocate
- Convene conversations about connection of kindergarten readiness and adequate, accessible, and affordable childcare
- Connect lack of childcare to labor shortage and economic recovery
- United Way Association of South Carolina advocate for childcare/school readiness tax credit for manufacturers

Support
- Expand health insurance access for childcare workers
- Extend Child Tax Credit

Local and state American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

Advocate
- Advocate for intentional and innovative investment in early childhood education in Spartanburg
- Advocate for investment in people and places with wraparound services for transformational change; including housing and homelessness prevention

Support
- Participate in and support coalitions like TogetherSC efforts to secure $100 million in ARPA funds for nonprofits in South Carolina

Educational Attainment

Lead
- Awareness about Workforce Scholarship availability and access to Associate Degrees at community colleges

Advocate
- 40/30 challenge: Raise Baccalaureate attainment in Spartanburg
- Expansion of mental health services in schools and community
- Increase awareness and utilization of the Sharpen Family app
Educational Attainment, continued

Support
- Financial Literacy Classes (S. 16)
- Broadband infrastructure and Digital Access

Economic Mobility

Lead
- Work towards Bold Goal to decrease number of Spartanburg, Cherokee and Union County residents below Self Sufficiency by 11,000
- Opportunity Housing Collaborative leads conversations, advocates for equitable housing practices, and works with partners to increase quality, affordable units
- Homelessness Prevention Fund
- Community Resource Coordinators in schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods
- 211 hotline and referrals to services

Advocate
- Financial Literacy Classes as graduation requirement (S.16)
- Connect transportation barriers to workforce access and support workplace initiatives to increase access to transportation

Access to Healthcare and Safe Environments

Lead
- Sharpen Family App roll out to parents and caregivers
- Convene Behavioral Health Task Force
- 211 referrals to health resources

Advocate
- Mental Health America 288 Suicide Prevention Hotline roll out
- Hello Family initiatives in Spartanburg
- Expand Interstate Compacts for mental health providers across state lines