



UNITED WAY BAY AREA

Public Policy Platform

United Way Bay Area's public policy platform reflects our organization's commitment to improving opportunities for all community members. This platform is part of our comprehensive effort to end the cycle of poverty in the Bay Area through philanthropy, advocacy, volunteerism and community impact. Our goals are to ensure people's basic needs are met, improve student achievement and expand workforce development, increase financial stability among working families, and advance the common good by building strong communities.

Basic Needs

United Way works to ensure that basic human needs such as food, shelter, and health are met to provide a solid platform for people to move from poverty to prosperity.

Health: UWBA advocates to ensure all people have access to affordable health coverage and care regardless of income, age, or immigration status. California has made significant progress in increasing health coverage due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid, with a reduction in the uninsured rate from 16% in 2013 to 8.7% in 2016. However, 2.9 million Californians still remain uninsured.¹ While some make too much to qualify for Medi-Cal and not enough to receive subsidies through the Affordable Care Act, others do not qualify for coverage simply due to their immigration status. Having access to care is a basic human right and we are all healthier when everyone has coverage.

Affordable Housing & Homelessness: UWBA advocates for policies and programs that increase supply, improve conditions, and remove barriers to safe and stable affordable housing. Housing is a key component of economic success yet remains out of reach for many of the state's working families. More than 3 million of California's renters pay more than 30% of their monthly income on rent, while 1.7 million pay more than 50% of monthly income.² These high

¹ California Health Care Foundation, "California's Uninsured: Progress Toward Universal Coverage," August 2018 <https://www.chcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/UninsuredAlmanac2018.pdf>

² California Housing and Community Development, "California's Housing Future: Challenges and Opportunities," February 2018

costs often leave little else for basic necessities like food, child care, and transportation. Advocating for access to affordable housing is a key component of preventing homelessness and a foundation for achieving financial stability.

Food Security: UWBA advocates for policies and programs that increase food access and affordability, including CalFresh/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP). The US Department of Agriculture defines food security as access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. More than 12% of state's households are considered food insecure, including 20% of the state's children.³ For many people, achieving food security is a daily struggle often aggravated by limited income, lack of physical access to fresh and nutritious food, inadequate food supports, or a combination of all three.

Education and Workforce

United Way works to improve educational and workforce development opportunities from early childhood education through secondary and post-secondary degrees and beyond to career training and development.

Early Learning and School Readiness: UWBA advocates to increase access to affordable, high-quality childcare and early education, including expanding the number of subsidized childcare slots and investing in early intervention and developmental services for infants and children. Quality childcare and preschool foster children's brain development and build skills that enable future academic and economic success, while also providing a critical support to working families.

Education Success: UWBA advocates for pathways to a sustainable future and remove barriers in the education system. All students should be supported throughout their K-12 years so they graduate high school with the skills and preparation to succeed in college, technical education, or the workforce.

Workforce Development: By 2025, California is likely to face a shortage of workers with postsecondary education compared with the share of jobs that will require workers with those skills.⁴ Job training and workforce development programs must be strengthened so that adults can reskill and upskill to increase their earning potential and meet the needs of California's evolving economy.

³ United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx#map>, and Feeding America, "Map the Meal Gap," pg. 31 at <http://www.feedingamerica.org/research/map-the-meal-gap/2015/2015-maphthmealgap-exec-summary.pdf>

⁴ California Public Policy Institute, "California's Need for Skilled Workers," September 2014 at <http://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-need-for-skilled-workers/>

Financial Stability

United Way seeks to improve conditions for economic mobility so that everyone has an opportunity to thrive.

Income Supports for Working Families and Individuals: UWBA advocates to improve or expand the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)/CalWORKs. Refundable tax credits like EITC and CTC are among the most effective anti-poverty tools. In 2016, 27 million U.S. workers received more than \$67 billion in federal EITC, with an average credit amount of \$2,455. TANF/CalWORKs is designed to help families get back on their feet by providing short-term cash aid and services to assist with basic needs. In 2017, there were 1.2 million CalWORKs recipients in the state including 975,000 children.⁵ Recent state budgets have incrementally increased CalWORKs grant levels, but not at a level that restores cuts made in prior years.

Financial Justice: UWBA advocates for financial tools and policies that remove burdens on people in poverty and make economic mobility possible. People who are working to improve their financial situation often face systemic barriers that prevent them from getting out of poverty. These barriers can take many forms, including fines and fees that people cannot afford to pay, suspension of driver's license due to inability to pay penalties, negative impact on credit scores, and payday lending practices. These financial trapdoors disproportionately impact low income and people of color.

Strong Communities

United Way brings together individuals and multi-sectors to respond to our region's most pressing challenges and build community capacity to advance the common good.

Immigration Reform: UWBA advocates for comprehensive immigration reform that expands opportunities for immigrants and refugees to live and work lawfully in the U.S., including a permanent solution for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). One out of every three workers in California is an immigrant, and nearly half of all children in California have at least one immigrant parent.⁶ Immigrant communities are integral to our civic, cultural, and economic life, yet in today's climate, immigrants and refugees are facing fear, discrimination, and family separation due to targeted rhetoric and federal immigration policies. Everyone deserves an opportunity to thrive, no matter their country of origin or current legal status.

⁵ California Department of Social Services, "CalWorks Factsheet," January 2017 at <http://www.cdss.ca.gov/calworks/res/pdf/CalWORKsKeyFactsFigures.pdf>.

⁶ California Immigrant Policy Center, "Advancing Economic Opportunities for California Immigrant and Refugee Workforce," 2017 at https://prismic-io.s3.amazonaws.com/cipc-cms%2F4899062e-57a9-47be-9725-0cbab72abaa9_advancing+economic+opportunity+for+ca+immigrant+refugee+workforce+-+oct+2017.pdf

Nonprofit Sector: UWBA supports policies and strategies that seek to enhance the capacity of the nonprofit sector to serve people in need, and advocates for strengthened charitable giving and human services. Nonprofits provide a critical role in fostering the social and economic well-being of people in need and engaging the broader community on solutions that lift everyone up. The need for a robust nonprofit sector is now more apparent with the cumulative impact of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which has resulted in significant reductions to charitable giving and the sector's ability to respond adequately to community needs.

Civic Engagement: UWBA supports policies and practices that promote an inclusive, accessible, and informed democratic process – encouraging diversity and civility in public debate, promoting citizenship, nonpartisan voter registration and turnout, as well as fostering an informed electorate through voter education. Civic participation is critical for a healthy democracy and can take many forms, from engagement in public deliberation and dialogue to participation in the electoral process.