

United Way of Kennebec Valley 2022 Policy and Advocacy Priorities

Laws and policies have the power to strengthen or harm individuals, families, and entire communities. The seven United Ways that partner to create the United Ways of Maine (UWME) engage in public policy and advocacy as part of their larger efforts to improve education, financial stability, and health outcomes in their local communities.

All seven United Ways agree to sign on to testimony, advocacy efforts, and other outreach to Maine state government officials and legislators concerning the following priorities. A guiding principle will be engaging in policy with a racial equity lens, and we will work to ensure vulnerable populations are being supported.

A. Every child, beginning at birth, has the positive experiences and relationships needed for healthy brain development and learning.

- Ensure children and their families have quality, basic services that promote and support healthy development, by supporting sufficient food, stable housing, adequate health care, supports for families including resources that aid in the prevention of and response to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and strengthened connections among community resources, families, and schools.
- Ensure parents are supported, engaged, and given good information on how to foster their children's healthy brain and social-emotional development, by supporting research-based home visiting programs Maine Families and Early Head Start, and other family supports.
- Ensure children and families have quality early learning settings, by supporting quality child care and child care subsidies, Early Head Start and Head Start services, timely access to intensive supports, and support for teacher preparation and development.
- Ensure all children have the support they need to read proficiently by the end of third grade, including access to and support for quality education, resources to increase student attendance, and support for families to meet their basic needs.

B. Individuals and families have the education, employment opportunities, and resources to achieve financial stability.

- Ensure individuals and families have the earnings/income and assets to be financially stable, by supporting individual and employer incentives including the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.
- Ensure individuals and families have a financial safety net when needed, by supporting strong investments in critical needs programs including General Assistance (GA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- Ensure individuals and families have safe shelter and stable, affordable housing, including Housing First models.
- Ensure youth and adults receive support to graduate from high school or complete a high school credential, and have the support to complete post-secondary degrees, certifications and/or training to meet their career needs.
- Ensure individuals and families have the support they need to access and remain in the workforce, such as child care, transportation, student-debt mitigation, and broadband network access.

C. Children, adults and communities have the resources and opportunities to be as healthy as possible.

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- Ensure everyone can address their physical and behavioral health needs, including restoring or strengthening funding for health initiatives to support health prevention and early prevention activities, such as the Fund for a Healthy Maine.
- Ensure vulnerable individuals and families have affordable, quality health care, and support efforts to expand Medicaid and maintain services provided by the Affordable Care Act.
- Ensure youth and adults receive mental health and substance use disorder treatment services.

In addition to these priorities, UWME will continue to educate policymakers about the importance of 211 Maine, the charitable deduction, and public policy efforts led by United Way Worldwide.