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United Way of Illinois

CONTACT:
Jack Kaplan Director,
Public Policy and Advocacy
jack.kaplan@uw-mc.org
Phone: 312.906.2368
unitedwayillinois.org

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United Way staff with State Comptroller Judy Baar Topinka at 2011 Lobby Day in Springfield.

United Way of Illinois

UNITED WAY OF ILLINOIS

Fiscal 2011 Annual Report

OUR MISSION: United Way of Illinois is a statewide association of 53 local organizations that create long-lasting community change by helping children and youth achieve their potential, promoting financial stability and family independence and improving people's health.

Dear United Way of Illinois Members:

During the past year, United Way of Illinois and its 53 member organizations have kept a sharp focus on human services issues across the state, with a particular emphasis on our three pillars of income, education and health as well as a commitment to strengthening our sector.

Our efforts have been challenged in recent years by the economic recession and the state's budget crisis. But, in times like these, we also have the opportunity to become more focused and effective in our pursuits.

In 2011, United Way of Illinois capitalized on several opportunities to strengthen our organization and enhance our voice as a leader on statewide issues. We have grown from a start-up in 2008 to a coalition with clearly shared goals today.

Together, we are the largest non-government funder of health and human services in the state and individually, in our respective communities. Our member organizations know first-hand the difficulties facing our providers and their clients. That insight helped inform our 2011 Public Policy Agenda, a strong platform guiding our collective work in income, education, health and sector strength.

In April, our annual Lobby Day in Springfield brought us together to advocate for legislation aligning with our agenda and to press our concerns with legislators and executive office leaders. Our group of 20 staff and volunteers from United Ways across the state met with top officials in both branches. As a result, we helped secure passage of two key bills, the Immunization Data Registry Act related to our health agenda and the Management Improvement Initiative Committee related to our sector strengthening agenda.

As we look forward to next year, we anticipate the statewide roll-out of 2-1-1, a non-emergency telephone number that connects people with essential community information and services. United Way of Illinois spearheaded a 2-1-1 pilot program in 2009. Since then, more than 40,000 calls have come into our three pilot sites.

2-1-1 has proved to be a tremendous tool to connect individuals and families with housing, counseling, employment support and other assistance. We are eager for residents across the state to have access to this valuable service.

In the coming year, we will continue to adapt our strategies to achieve the greatest impact in our core areas of income, education, health and sector strength. These challenging times require us to respond with flexibility and a renewed sense of determination. If we do so together, we can build up our communities and create lasting change across the state.

Sincerely,

Nancy Coolley
Chairman, Board of Directors
Coolley Consulting, Lake Forest

Advancing the Common Good Through Public Policy

The 2011 Public Policy Agenda focuses on four key areas:

INCOME

United Way of Illinois will engage policymakers, business leaders and the nonprofit community to craft policies that enable the state's lower-income families to achieve financial stability. The first step toward this goal is to ensure access to tools and resources that help individuals and families reduce debts and increase income, build savings and grow assets.

SUCCESS: Proposed legislation supported by UWI resulted in a voluntary agreement with the state Treasurer's Office to collect data on race, ethnicity and income for participants of the state's 529 Bright Start College Savings Program. While technically available to anyone, the program's current structure makes it difficult for low-income families and ethnic and racial minorities to participate. Understanding who uses the accounts will allow targeted outreach and planning to increase college savings for all Illinois students.

EDUCATION

United Way of Illinois will advocate for state and local policies aimed at increasing student achievement from early childhood education and school-readiness to high school completion, college-readiness and workforce development. Central to this policy are:

- Access to quality early learning opportunities beginning at birth
- Parent and community engagement in education
- A broad-based accountability framework

SUCCESS: UWI supported collaboration among stakeholders – teacher unions, education advocates and school administrators – who worked together to produce an education reform bill that makes performance, not seniority, the main criterion in teacher layoffs, teaching assignments, tenure and certification.

SUCCESS: Our advocacy efforts at the federal level helped preserve funding for Parent Information Resource Centers. These centers are the sole provider of technical assistance and capacity building for local districts and states to engage families in education reform.

HEALTH

United Way of Illinois will support public policy initiatives to identify and advance efforts that achieve the long-term goal of improving people's physical and mental health. To accomplish this goal, United Way will focus on:

- Access to affordable health services for children and low-income adults
- Policies that support wellness and healthy lifestyles for children, youth and older adults

SUCCESS: Promotion of the Immunization Data Registry Act during our annual Lobby Day in Springfield helped secure the bill's passage in both houses. The act gives the state authority to develop and maintain an immunization data registry to collect, store, analyze, release and report immunization data. Data in the registry will be used to ensure needed immunizations are provided and over-immunization is avoided.

HUMAN SERVICES SECTOR STRENGTH

United Way of Illinois will support policy initiatives that seek to strengthen the human service sector. We must ensure our public infrastructure includes a well-managed network of nonprofit community services that complement traditional government institutions. In order for communities and families throughout Illinois to succeed and prosper, we must repair and strengthen the essential services that protect public health, improve public safety, revitalize local economies and enhance learning.

SUCCESS: Building on last year's achievement of securing passage of the Streamlined Auditing Bill, UWI played an active role on the steering committee that developed recommendations to reduce duplication and create improved efficiencies in the auditing processes that the state requires of community providers. A follow up bill, creating the Management Improvement Initiative Committee, will review state contracts with community health and human service providers, eliminate redundancies and integrate work processes across state divisions and departments.

SUCCESS: More than 40,000 calls for assistance have come through 2-1-1 in Illinois since we led the effort to bring the non-emergency telephone number to the state. The 24-hour line connects the public with human service providers for various needs, such as shelter, counseling and income support. In 2010, calls increased 3.6% over 2009.