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UNITED WAY OF ILLINOIS

2016–2017 ANNUAL REPORT

PHOTO BY DANIEL SCHWEN

United Way of Illinois

UNITED WAY OF ILLINOIS (UWI) is a statewide association of 46 local organizations that create lasting community change by helping children and youth succeed in school, promoting financial stability and family independence and improving people's health.

DEAR UNITED WAY OF ILLINOIS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,

I have been so honored to lead the United Way of Illinois (UWI) Board of Directors for the past year as we found a path forward amid increasing challenges. Our state-wide organization continued to promote the public policy interests of our 46 local United Way members, provide educational opportunities and lead statewide initiatives designed to improve Illinois communities. As we move forward, our focus continues to be on education, income and health—the building blocks for a good quality of life and a strong community.

Much of our effort this past year has been as the barometer on the impact of stalled state support for the United Ways' provider organizations. Through periodic surveys, UWI measured the effect of the budget impasse on human service agencies, the programs and services they deliver and the individuals and families they serve, identifying trends and underscoring the drastic need for a full and complete budget from Springfield.

Impact reports have been shared with policymakers, communities and the media. The numerous organizations that support human service providers through workplace donations are better informed on the issues and able to join in the effort. Communications with Illinois policymakers were intensified at our April Lobby Day through meetings with Governor Rauner and many legislative leaders. The UWI offer of assistance was gladly given and well-received.

As we look to the future, helping local United Ways understand and facilitate collaboration among human service providers has been identified as a state-wide need. Collaboration and integrated service delivery will be critical for many of our United Way partner agencies who are now struggling to do more with fewer resources. We look forward to providing more opportunities for members to connect with one another and to move human services forward in our state.

Being a leader in change is a role the United Way of Illinois embraces as we continue to give, advocate and volunteer to advance the common good.

Sonja Reece

SONJA REECE
CHAIR, UNITED WAY OF ILLINOIS

United Way of Illinois

ADVANCING THE COMMON GOOD THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY

Our 2017 Public Policy Agenda focused on four key areas:

EDUCATION

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

Illinois' competitiveness in a global economy depends upon academic achievement. To succeed, students must enter school ready to learn and navigate the transitions to high school, post-secondary study and work.

To ensure children receive a quality education and stay in school through graduation, United Way of Illinois will:

- Advocate to make high-quality, affordable early-learning opportunities available to all children
- Promote partnerships that support family engagement and community-based involvement to improve student academic achievement
- Support comprehensive and consistent assessment and measurement standards from Pre-K through high school graduation

SUCCESS The General Assembly approved three bills to address school attendance issues including improved state reporting and identification of resources to support students at risk of exceeding chronic absence levels. All 3 await the Governor's approval.

Legislation establishing a program that would automatically open a 529 college savings account at birth for every child born in Illinois was approved by both chambers and awaits further legislative action.

INCOME

FOSTERING STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH FINANCIAL STABILITY

Financial stability has taken on greater importance for many Illinoisans as our economy ebounds. Households that are financially stable and have sufficient income to support their families create a stronger community and economy.

To ensure families and individuals have the resources they need to achieve financial stability, United Way of Illinois will:

- Support increased access to work support programs and streamlined processes for critical benefits
- Promote strengthening of financial literacy programs to help individuals avoid financial hardship and develop lifelong security

SUCCESS The state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) will increase from 10% to 18% by 2018 as part of the enacted FY18 state budget. UWI lead the advocacy in support of the increase and testified at a Revenue Committee hearing during the spring session. EITC is broadly considered our nation's most effective pro-work, anti-poverty tool.

HEALTH

ENSURING ACCESS TO CARE AND PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE

Access to affordable, quality health coverage is the key to ensuring Illinoisans can lead healthy lives. Receiving healthcare early in life and throughout adulthood is an important way to prevent obesity and chronic diseases that are becoming more prevalent today.

To ensure families and individuals are able to live healthy lives, United Way of Illinois will:

- Support access to healthcare by connecting people to affordable, comprehensive health services
- Combat preventable chronic disease through the promotion of strategies that support wellness and healthy lifestyles

SUCCESS UWI added its voice to a broad range of organizations that successfully opposed federal health care policy proposals which would have diminished existing healthcare coverage and reduced consumer protections for all Illinoisans.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

BUILDING CAPACITY TO ADVANCE THE COMMON GOOD

Much like roads, hospitals and schools, community services are part of our state's vital public infrastructure that must be maintained and strengthened. In order to continue advancing the common good, we must make sure the state has a well-managed and highly coordinated network of community services.

To ensure Illinois has the essential services that protect public health and safety, revitalize local economies and enhance learning, United Way of Illinois will:

- Advocate for a state budget that adequately funds strategic investments in Illinois' health and human services
- Promote fair, efficient and transparent contracting practices between service providers and government funders
- Support efforts to reduce unnecessary state administrative burdens on human service providers and their programs
- Enhance community resources that ensure a seamless infrastructure of health and human service support for those in need

SUCCESS UWI conducted two state budget impasse surveys which informed and educated policymakers as to the harm the stalemate was causing to human service providers and the individuals, families and communities they serve throughout Illinois.