

### KIM SPORT, Public Policy Chair

The **United Way of Southeast Louisiana (UWSELA) 2019 Public Policy Legislative Agenda, “United for a Safe & Prosperous Community,”** continues our advocacy fighting for the health, education, and financial stability of every person. This agenda is aligned with **United Way’s Blueprint for Prosperity**, our plan to eradicate poverty in Southeast Louisiana, and lifts up **ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) – households who are living paycheck to paycheck, one financial emergency from falling into poverty.

UWSELA’s Public Policy team worked closely with state legislators, the governor’s staff, and collaborative partners to ensure successful passage of legislation which will help create a better, stronger community for all.

We’d like to wish a special thank you to Governor John Bel Edwards for his extraordinary leadership throughout the 2019 Louisiana Legislative Session.

We are also grateful to Louisiana representatives and senators who served as United Way’s 2019 Legislative Champions for education, financial stability, health, and community strengthening issues during this session, including: Senators John Alario, Conrad Appel, Regina Barrow, Wesley Bishop, Troy Carter, Yvonne Colomb, Randal Gaines, Ronnie Johns, Eric LaFleur, Danny Martiny, Beth Mizell and JP Morrell; Representatives Neil Abramson, Larry Bagley, Taylor Barras, Joseph Bouie, Steve Carter, Mary DuBuisson, Royce Duplessis, Cameron Henry, Stephanie Hilferty, Walt Leger III, Joseph Marino, John Stefanski, Julie Stokes, Kirk Talbot and Malinda White.

Thank you to UWSELA’s Board of Trustees, Public Policy Committee, Women United, staff, volunteers, and collaborative partners who advocated and gave public testimony during session.

Information on all legislative bills can be found on the [Louisiana State Legislature’s website](#).

## EDUCATION

For the first time in ten years, Louisiana has made a new state investment in early care and education. This investment is a significant accomplishment, and we are grateful for all the extraordinary efforts put forth to make these new funds a reality.

**1,450 additional children will be able to access the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and 800 children will be able to access a Pre-K program with these new funds.**



CCAP provides subsidies to parents who are working or in school so that they can access quality, reliable care for their young children. CCAP maximum payment rates will also increase, which will allow more families to access high-quality care. In addition, Harrah's New Orleans is likely to fund **an additional 580 children** and incentivize an equal number of slots with local matching public and private dollars.

### **NEW funding for Early Care and Education in ACT 10 ([House Bill 105](#)), the State Budget: \$15.2 million**

- NEW state funding for the CCAP for children birth through age 3:
  - \$2.3 million to raise the maximum provider payment rates for the current 15,000 seats (as Louisiana is under corrective action by the federal government to do so)
  - \$8.9 million for CCAP slots at the new rate, which will fund an additional 1,450 children on the CCAP waitlist
    - *This leaves 4,050 children remaining who are on the waitlist or authorized and unfunded for CCAP.*
  - Total new funding for CCAP: \$11.2 million
- NEW state funding to sustain the current level of the Pre-K Program:
  - \$4 million for Pre-K for four-year-olds to replace a federal grant that is ending this school year and fund 800 seats
    - *These are EXISTING ECE funds that the Louisiana Department of Education will use to cover the remaining Pre-K slots that were funded by the federal grant.*



### **NEW funding for Early Care and Education in ACT 171 ([HB 544](#)), Harrah's Casino Contract: \$3.6 million**

- \$3.6 million will go to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Trust Fund if the casino revenues are greater than \$60 million (which they have been for every year for the last 10 years except one, in 2017)
- This bill renews the contract of Harrah's as the land-based casino in New Orleans.

### **Other Future Funding for Early Care and Education: CBD Products in ACT 247 ([HB 560](#))**

- House Bill 560 by Representative Neil Abramson provides for a 3% excise tax dedicated to the Early Childhood Education Trust Fund on each retail sale of industrial hemp-derived CBD products within the state of Louisiana
  - *The fiscal note on the bill states that a reliable estimate of the expected sale price and volume of these products is unavailable. However, this will provide further dedicated funds for early education.*

**ACT 223 (House Bill 395) authored by Representative Steve Carter** refines the provisions of the Early Childhood Education Trust Fund, clarifying the local match amounts (1:1 local to state), how the money will be used if the locals have matching funds for projects that will expand the number CCAP slots, the eligibility requirements for local funds, and how remaining funds after the local matching is complete may be utilized for quality slots for children birth through age two.

**HR 222 authored by Representative Steve Carter** requests the state Department of Education to create the Early Literacy Commission to study and make recommendations to develop and implement an aligned system to provide effective evidence-based reading instruction for children from birth through third grade.

## Early Ed Day at the Capitol: A Major Success

Special thanks to everyone who made the 2019 Early Ed Day at the Capitol such a huge success. Over 120 business, civic, and education leaders took to the Capitol to advocate for more funding for early care and education.

Participants spoke with dozens of legislators throughout the day, and during the standing-room-only lunch, Governor John Bel Edwards pledged an additional \$4.3 million to the Child Care Assistance Program. For more information, view [Governor wants \\$4.3M more for early childhood education in new pledge of support; here's why](#) (The Advocate), [Advocates push for early childhood education at the Capitol](#) (WWL Radio), and the [video](#) of the luncheon presentations.

While fantasy sports betting was approved, the taxing instrument failed in the senate. Experts estimated ECE would have received an estimated \$300,000 in new funding with approved taxation, but we must now wait another two years to revisit the legislation unless a special session in 2020.

**HB 600 authored by Representative Kirk Talbot** levies a state tax on the net gaming proceeds of fantasy sports contests, and authorizes a fee for issuance of certain licenses or permits. *House adopted Conference Committee Report*

**SB 153 authored by Senator Danny Martiny** provides relative to sports wagering. **Failed**

**SB 196 authored by Senator JP Morrell** authorizes local government to charge a fee on certain gaming winnings to fund local early childhood programs. **Failed**

**HB 495 authored by Representative Neil Abramson** authorizes an 8% state tax on net gaming proceeds from fantasy sports contests and dedicates the avails of the tax to the state general fund and the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund. **Failed**



**HB 587 authored by Representative Joseph Marino** levies a 15% state tax on the net proceeds of sports wagering and dedicates 1% or \$500,000, whichever is greater, to the Compulsive and Problem Gaming Fund and the remainder of the proceeds to the Early Childhood Education Fund and parish governing authorities. Authorizes certain permits and imposes fees for entities involved in the sports wagering gaming industry. **Failed**

## FINANCIAL STABILITY

UWSELA Public Policy arranged testimony for **SB 155 authored by Senator Troy Carter** in the Senate Labor & Industrial Relations in support of minimum wage and pay transparency. Warner Thomas, President & CEO of Ochsner; Pres Kabacoff, Executive Board Chair of HRI Properties; Bill Hammack, Co-Owner of the Link Restaurant Group; and Maire Sweeny, Tulane University Student/UWSELA Public Policy Intern all [provided testimony in favor of an increase in the minimum wage.](#)

Once again, Louisiana lawmakers failed to make progress on minimum wage, paid leave, and equal pay for women. The federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour has not increased since 2009. Since then, the cost of goods has increased by 17%, which has had a significant impact on our **ALICE** households, communities, and employers.

**SB 155 authored by Senator Troy Carter** is a constitutional amendment to establish a state minimum hourly wage of nine dollars, effective July 1, 2020, and authorize the legislature to increase the minimum wage by law. **Failed**

**SB 136 authored by Senator JP Morrell** promotes pay transparency by prohibiting employers from taking actions against employees for inquiring about, discussing, or disclosing their wages or those of other employees. **Failed**



**SB 186 authored by Senator JP Morrell** establishes a statewide paid family and medical leave program. **Failed**

**HB 289 authored by Representative Barbara Norton** provides relative to equal pay for women. **Failed**

**HB 422 authored by Representative Royce Duplessis** authorizes parishes and municipalities to provide relative to the local economy. **Failed**

## HEALTH

**Representative Julie Stokes** has proven once again that she is a champion for women and the Governor has signed into law all three of our bills:

**ACT 118 (HB 345) authored by Representative Julie Stokes** provides for coverage for breast and ovarian cancer susceptibility screening. This legislation requires insurance to cover the BRCA test – an indicator for breast cancer – before women test positive for cancer so they can know their risks before it is too late.

**ACT 119 (HB 347) authored by Representative Julie Stokes** provides for the coverage of diagnostic imaging at the same level of coverage as screening mammograms. This legislation requires insurance to fully cover the diagnostic tests for breast cancer in addition to the initial screens.

**ACT 120 (HB 370) authored by Representative Julie Stokes** provides relative to prescription drug benefits for persons with stage-four advanced, metastatic cancer. This legislation stops the insurance industry from requiring patients to use the cheapest treatment first before moving onto more expensive, and possibly more effective, treatments that have been ordered by their doctor.

Additional legislation in the area of health:

**ACT 237 (HB 489) authored by Representative Mary DuBuisson** expands the definition of what is not hearsay to include statements made by the victim of a sexually-oriented criminal offense to a health care provider during a forensic medical examination if the statement is documented in writing by the healthcare provider.

Diapers and feminine hygiene products never made the cut as a necessity and are taxed at the full state sales tax rate. Exempting these items would benefit women and families with young children, who are already disproportionately living in poverty.

**SB 4 authored by Senator JP Morrell** is a constitutional amendment to exempt diapers and feminine hygiene products from state sales and use tax. **Failed**

**SB 5 authored by Senator JP Morrell** exempts diapers and feminine hygiene products from sales and use tax. **Failed**

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**We were successful with our gun divestiture legislation and all three domestic violence bills have been signed into law.**

**ACT 427 (HB 279) authored by Representative Joseph Marino** provides relative to persons who are prohibited from possessing a firearm pursuant to certain domestic abuse convictions or prevention orders, to the transfer of such firearms to the sheriff or a third party, and to the duties and authority of the sheriff in this regard.

**ACT 406 (SB 71) authored by Senator Troy Carter** provides relative to interpreters for non-English-speaking persons in civil protective order cases.

**ACT 410 (SB 146) authored by Senator JP Morrell** prohibits the incarceration of victims of domestic violence and sex offenses who refuse to testify against their abusers.

# COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

## Human Trafficking

**ACT 409 (SB 145) authored by Senator Ronnie Johns** provides relative to human trafficking.

## Juvenile Justice Reform

**ACT 147 (HB 158) authored by Representative Malinda White** provides relative to the detention or release of juveniles.

**ACT 148 (HB 160) authored by Representative Joseph Bouie** provides for the collection and reporting of certain information relative to school safety and discipline

**ACT 386 (HB 518) authored by Representative Randal L. Gaines** provides relative to the sentencing of habitual offenders.

**ACT 401 (SB 172) authored by Senator Yvonne Colomb** mandates the minimum age for marriage shall be 16 years of age.

**SB 137 authored by Senator Wesley Bishop** provides relative to student discipline. **Failed**

## Foster Care

**There's Good News for our youth – legislators extended the foster care age to 21.**

**ACT 400 (SB 109) authored by Senator Regina Barrow** provides that a child can stay in foster care if he is housed at a residential home, transitional placing program, or in foster care until his 21st birthday while participating in an extended foster care program.

DCFS received in the budget \$15 million in new funding to serve foster children up to the age of 21.

- Legislation was signed into law which will allow the Department of Children and Family Services to assist children aging out of the foster care system with their transition into housing, post-secondary education, and employment.



Louisiana's youth and families are safer and stronger today thanks to the herculean efforts of so many passionate child advocates.

**ACT 12 (HB 180) authored by Representative Larry Bagley** creates the crime of interfering with emergency communication.

**ACT 429 (HB 389) authored by Representative Julie Stokes** provides for naming the Supreme Court Building after Pascal F. Calogero, Jr.

**SR 31** *authored by Senator JP Morrell* commends Mary Claire Landry upon receipt of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Alliance for HOPE International.

**ACT 33 (HB 112)** *authored by Representative John Stefanski* provides relative to criminal convictions which disqualify a person from becoming a foster or adoptive parent or relative guardian of a child.