2022 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

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SIGN UP FOR ACTION ALERTS

UnitedWaySELA.org/Advocate
United Way of Southeast Louisiana’s (UWSELA) Blueprint for Prosperity advances our mission to eradicate poverty and support ALICE® (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households. ALICE represents the growing number of individuals and families across Louisiana who work hard but are unable to afford basic household necessities, including housing, child care, health care, food, and transportation.

According to the United Way ALICE Report for Louisiana, over half of households in our state were living in poverty or struggling to make ends meet even before COVID-19 and hurricanes Laura, Delta, and Ida. The level of financial hardship is even higher for children. ALICE in Focus: Children highlights that 57% of children in Louisiana were growing up in households with incomes below the ALICE Threshold in 2019.

UWSELA Public Policy Committee’s 2022 State Legislative Agenda advanced our Blueprint for Prosperity and worked to stabilize ALICE households by ensuring health, education, and financial stability for all.

UWSELA Public Policy coordinated with our Community Impact team to ensure we included issues resonating in our community and affecting ALICE families in this agenda. We also held two education sessions featuring a range of experts. We thank our partners for sharing their knowledge to help UWSELA create a robust legislative agenda and for sharing our commitment to eliminating poverty.

Educational Session #1: Education, Financial Stability, and Health – LINK
Educational Session #2: Health, Community Strengthening, and DEI – LINK

UWSELA staff also participated in several pre-session panel discussions to share expertise on policy and advocacy.

The Louisiana State Legislature held two 2022 Extraordinary Sessions this year to redraw district lines for the state House and Senate to include two majority-Black districts but failed. Redistricting is required every 10 years with the release of new U.S. Census data to account for population shifts. About a third of Louisiana’s population is comprised of Black residents, and it is possible to draw a second Black seat. Louisiana’s redistricting will now be decided in federal court after the Legislature’s failure to draw a new map. We will continue to fight for equity in redistricting.
2022 LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS

The 2022 Louisiana Legislative Session ended with major victories for ALICE. Thank you to our 2022 Louisiana Legislative Champions who supported our efforts in education, financial stability, health, and community strengthening: Governor John Bel Edwards, First Lady Donna Edwards, Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, Commissioner of Administration Jay Dardenne, and Superintendent of Education Dr. Cade Brumley; Senators Regina Barrow, Gary Carter, Patrick Connick, Patrick “Paige” Cortez, Cleo Fields, Cameron Henry, Jay Luneau, Fred H. Mills, Jr., Beth Mizell, Mike Reese, Kirk Talbot, and Mack “Bodi” White; Representatives Ken Brass, Chad Brown, Royce Duplessis, Aimee Freeman, Kyle Green, Stephanie Hilferty, Patrick Jefferson, Edmond Jordan, Jason Hughes, Mandie Landry, Denise Marcelle, Joseph Marino, Gregory Miller, Nicholas Muscarell, Richard Nelson, Candace Newell, Tammy Phelps, Thomas Pressly, Francis Thompson, and Matthew Willard.

Thank you to our champions who help build stronger communities every day by lending their voices, resources, and time to lift up ALICE families: UWSELA Board of Trustees, Public Policy Committee, Women United, staff, and volunteers.

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO:


Your hard work, research, phone calls, testimonies, and emails all played a significant part in the success of this legislative session.

Information on all legislation can be viewed on the Louisiana State Legislature’s website: legis.la.gov/legis/BillSearch.aspx?sid=current
EDUCATION

United Way of Southeast Louisiana and advocates have worked for years to bring early care and education needs into the public eye and build broad bipartisan support for expanded access to child care.

EARLY ED DAY AT THE CAPITOL 2022
The Ready Louisiana Coalition’s 2022 Early Ed Day at the Capitol was a tremendous success. Advocates from across the state gathered to speak with legislators on the importance of investing in early childhood education, and Ready Louisiana was recognized on both the House and Senate floors with a formal proclamation. View a recording of the Coalition’s press conference here.

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION LEGISLATION
Thanks to the dedicated advocacy of the Ready Louisiana Coalition, which UWSELA founded and is proud to help lead with collaborative partners, state legislators appropriated a total of $84 million for early care and education programs during this 2022 Regular Legislative Session.

$44 million for early care and education in the state budget
The Legislature passed the state budget (HB 1) which includes $44 million in funding to improve early care and education, $25 million to expand the Child Care Assistance Program, and around $18 million to improve rates offered to existing four-year-old programs. Special thanks to Representative Jerome Zeringue who authored the bill.

$40 million in one-time funding for the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund
The Legislature passed a supplemental funding bill (HB 406) which appropriates $40 million in one-time funding to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund to incentivize cities and parishes to make local investments to expand access to high-quality early care and education. Special thanks to Representative Jerome Zeringue who authored the bill.

Certain parishes can now invest in early care and education as a juvenile justice prevention effort
The Legislature passed HB 460 which seeks to expand the purposes for certain parishes¹ to repurpose juvenile justice funding to include preventative services for young children and their families. These services include increasing access to early care and education and investing in early care and education infrastructure and parental support. Special thanks to Representative Ken Brass who authored the bill.

¹ The following parishes are excluded: Acadia, Allen, Assumption, Beauregard, Bienville, Caddo, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, Evangeline, Franklin, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafourche, LaSalle, Madison, Orleans, Rapides, Richland, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Vermilion, Vernon, and West Carroll.

Establishing a revenue and compensation task force within the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission
The Legislature passed SB 169 which requires the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission to establish a task force to recommend strategies for alternative state and local funding for quality early childhood care and education and workforce compensation and benefits issues within the early childhood care and education field. Special thanks to Senator Beth Mizell who authored the bill.
New Orleans Voters Approved A 20-Year Millage to Fund Early Childhood Education

In April, New Orleans voters approved a 20-year property tax to expand access to quality early care and education in the city. It’s impossible to overstate the historic nature of this long-term investment in New Orleans children and families. United Way of Southeast Louisiana supported the Yes for NOLA Kids campaign in its efforts to pass this millage, and because of the successful vote, up to 2,000 low-income children will receive free, quality early childhood education through the City Seats program. Funding from the millage will also support capacity-building efforts, including center expansion and start-up grants, a necessity as many centers already have long waiting lists.

While the state and local progress we’ve made this year is promising, there’s a long way to go before every child and family in need can receive quality early childhood education. Expansion of access to early care and education will remain a key strategy in United Way SELA’s work to end poverty and ensure everyone in our community is healthy, educated, and financially stable.

We must provide opportunities for ALL families to access the quality child care and after-school programs needed for children to succeed in school and parents to be productive members of the workforce. We must provide ALL of our children with the education and services they need for a bright and fulfilling future.

OTHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION

ACT 167 (HB 406) by Rep. Jerome Zeringue
Funds/Funding: Provides for the transfer, deposit, and use of monies among state funds

ACT 627 (HB 460) by Rep. Ken Brass
Children: Expands the purposes for which a parish governing authority may levy a tax relative to early childhood programs

ACT 447 (HB 207) by Rep. Jason Hughes
Curricula: Adds Geometry as a required course for high school students in the career major program

ACT 463 (HB 346) by Rep. Francis C. Thompson
Student/Loans-Scholarship: Provides for a program and a fund for the purpose of providing scholarships for students in approved teacher preparation programs
FINANCIAL STABILITY

During this year’s Minimum Wage Day at the Legislature, UWSELA Public Policy’s Tulane Interns Natalie Pruitt and Cate Brodowski provided testimony in support of HB 311 by Rep. Marcelle and HB 229 by Rep. Green. Bills seeking to establish a livable wage, equal pay for women, and paid sick leave all failed to pass out of the House Labor and Industrial Relations Committee. This means many workers in our state continue to work for the $7.25 federal minimum wage, which has not been raised since 2009. See their testimony here: 

[link]

Natalie was also featured in a Mic’d Up on Facebook Live episode to share her research and expertise on the necessity of increasing the minimum wage.

Governor John Bel Edwards vetoed SB 381, the Louisiana Credit Access Loan Act, authored by Senator Rick Ward, which would legalize larger payday loans. UWSELA Public Policy signed an opposition letter to Governor Edwards with the Louisiana Budget Project and collaborative partners.

[link]

HB 219 by Rep. Kyle M. Green, Jr. (Failed)

[link]

EMPLOYMENT: Provides relative to equal pay for women

HB 229 by Rep. Kyle M. Green, Jr. (Failed)

[link]

EMPLOYMENT/WAGES-MINIMUM: (Constitutional Amendment) Establishes a state minimum wage

HB 311 by Rep. C. Denise Marcelle (Failed)

[link]

EMPLOYMENT/WAGES-MINIMUM: Establishes a state minimum wage rate

HB 472 by Rep. Tammy Phelps (Failed)

[link]

EMPLOYMENT/WAGES: Provides relative to wages for tipped employees
**HEALTH**

United Way of Southeast Louisiana believes that all Louisianans should have access to equitable health services that protect and improve health and well-being. We understand that health impacts the lives of our ALICE families who need increased services.

UWSELA supported health legislation this year that:

- Requires improvements to the safety of our long-term care facilities.
- Requests that the Louisiana Department of Health study options for delaying institutionalization of frail elders.
- Provides funding for crisis stabilization for fiscal year 2023.
- Requires the screening of new mothers for perinatal depression and mood disorders.
- Strengthens and broadens the use of telehealth and telemedicine services.
- Creates an Office of Women’s Health to study and coordinate issues of aging, maternal health, behavioral health, violence, and disease prevention.
- Addresses shortages of healthcare professionals through apprenticeships, continuing education, and K-12 career readiness programs.

**ACT 488 (HB 650) by Rep. Stephanie Hilferty**


MEDICAID: Provides for Medicaid coverage of prescription human milk (EG +$592,788 GF EX See Note)

**ACT 489 (HB 651) by Rep. Stephanie Hilferty**


INSURANCE/HEALTH: Provides relative to insurance coverage for prescription breast milk (EG INCREASE EX See Note)

**ACT 676 (SB 116) by Sen. Regina Ashford Barrow**


HEALTH DEPARTMENT: Creates the office on women’s health within the Louisiana Department of Health

**ACT 151 (HB 334) by Rep. Royce Duplessis**


HEALTH/BEHAVIORAL: Provides relative to employment with behavioral health services providers of peer support specialists
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

UWSELA understood early in advance of the session that families were facing “A Pandemic Within A Pandemic.” This is the terminology used by the New England Journal of Medicine to describe the crisis of intimate partner violence following the implementation of unprecedented COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. Forced confinement of victims with their abusers created tremendous concern for domestic violence service providers who expected a significant increase in demands for assistance. The opposite occurred and, in some locations, calls dropped by more than 50%.

The 2021 Legislative Auditor's Report issued on December 16, 2021, shows that Louisiana is failing to keep domestic violence victims safe. Overall the report found that Louisiana faces multiple challenges in addressing domestic violence. These challenges include gaps in services for victims, insufficient and inflexible funding, strategies to protect victims not being consistently implemented, lack of oversight for intervention programs for perpetrators, and lack of training for certain entities involved in addressing domestic violence. UWSELA fought for increased domestic violence shelter beds and support services to meet the needs of all victims, increased funding for the Louisiana Department of Children & Family Services, and uniformed data collection regarding gun transfers this session.

As a leader of the United Against Domestic Violence Coalition, UWSELA will continue to advocate for positions previously taken in the Louisiana Legislature to protect survivors of domestic violence. The Coalition’s 2022 legislative book, found here, provides background information on domestic violence in Louisiana and priority bills.

ACT 202 (HB 64) by Rep. Mandie Landry
CHILDREN: Provides relative to the definition of a child

ACT 372 (HB 124) by Rep. Nicholas Muscarell
CIVIL/PROCEDURE: Provides relative to certain judicial proceedings conducted by audio-visual means

ACT 450 (HB 223) by Rep. C. Denise Marcelle
COURTS: Provides relative to eligibility for the Reentry Court Specialty Program

ACT 614 (HB 272) by Rep. Patrick O. Jefferson
FAMILY LAW: Provides for mental health evaluations in divorce and child custody proceedings
ACT 207 (HB 313) by Rep. Thomas Pressly
CRIMINAL/VICTIMS: Provides relative to rights of victims of criminal offenses – (LCADV & STAR bill)

ACT 386 (HB 402) by Rep. Jason Hughes
PRESCRIPTION: Provides relative to the prescriptive period for certain actions for abuse of a minor

ACT 621 (HB 409) by Rep. Joseph Marino
CRIMINAL/PROCEDURE: Prohibits the issuance of a summons in lieu of an arrest for certain domestic violence crimes – (Support arrest of predominant aggressor)

ACT 625 (HB 431) by Rep. Edmond Jordan
CRIME/DNA: Provides relative to DNA database cross-referencing

ACT 568 (HB 508) by Rep. Gregory A. Miller
CRIME/SEX OFFENSES: Provides relative to notification when an inmate convicted of a violent or sexual offense is scheduled to be released

ACT 484 (HB 585) by Rep. Aimee Adatto Freeman
WEAPONS/FIREARMS: Provides relative to reporting of certain firearm data to the La. Commission on Law Enforcement

ACT 630 (HB 615) by Rep. Aimee Adatto Freeman
LAW ENFORCEMENT: Provides relative to law enforcement records

ACT 487 (HB 648) by Rep. Stephanie Hilferty
CRIMINAL/VICTIMS: Provides relative to the Crime Victims Reparations Act

ACT 513 (HB 1061) by Rep. Jason Hughes and Sen. Regina Barrow
HEALTH/WOMEN’S: Provides relative to emergency contraception for victims of sexual assault

ACT 291 (SB 51) by Sen. Beth Mizell
COURTS: Adds a second commissioner to the Twenty-Second Judicial District Court and authorizes commissioners to preside over domestic violence cases and civil matters (8/1/22) (OR +$125,250 LF EX See Note)
ACT 173 (SB 64) by Sen. Patrick Connick
CRIME/PUNISHMENT: Provides relative to crimes of violence and sex offenses (8/1/22)

ACT 75 (SB 66) by Sen. Patrick Connick
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Enhances penalties for violation of a protective order when committed while in possession of a firearm (8/1/22)

ACT 411 (SB 69) by Sen. Patrick Connick
CRIMINAL PROCEDURE: Provides relative to protections for crime victims. (8/1/22)

ACT 540 (SB 147) by Sen. Beth Mizell
SEX OFFENSES: Provides for sexual assault survivors to have access to certain documents from the forensic medical exam (8/1/22)

ACT 130 (SB 148) by Sen. Beth Mizell
CRIMINAL JUSTICE: Provides for post-conviction relief for victims of human trafficking

ACT 416 (SB 255) by Sen. Regina Barrow
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Provides relative to court costs and fees in domestic abuse cases

CHILDREN/CUSTODY: Requests the Louisiana State Law Institute to study evaluations conducted by mental health professionals used in child custody and visitation proceedings

HR 242 by Rep. Polly Thomas and Tanner Magee
CHILDREN/CUSTODY: Requests the Louisiana State Law Institute to study the Bergeron standard

SR 186 by Sen. Barrow Peacock
CHILDREN: To urge and request the Louisiana State Law Institute to review state laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures related to mental health evaluations used in child custody proceedings
COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

The strength of Louisiana's economy is inextricably tied to the financial stability of its residents. The more people participating in the state's economy, the stronger it will be. Over half of all households in the state struggled to support themselves before the pandemic. If all households earned enough to meet their basic needs, not only would each family's hardship be eased, but the Louisiana GDP would grow by an estimated $55+ billion.

UWSELA was aggressive in its legislative efforts to secure funding for the Prosperity Center; however, we were unsuccessful in acquiring the funding needed to expand our Prosperity Center model statewide. We will continue to advocate for the expansion of our Prosperity Center model, working in partnership with the Louisiana Association of United Ways.

In community strengthening, UWSELA also fought for increased funding and accountability for citizens impacted by natural disasters. We successfully advocated to increase accountability for insurers across the state.

UWSELA and Women United sponsored the National Coalition for the Prevention of Human Sex Trafficking National Awareness Campaign Kick-Off hosted by First Lady Donna Edwards and the Louisiana First Foundation at the Four Seasons Hotel New Orleans. Charmaine Caccioppi served as a panelist highlighting UWSELA’s work in the area of Human Trafficking.

ACT 529 (HB 1083) by Rep. Candace Newell
DISCRIMINATION: Includes “skin color, facial characteristics, hair texture, natural hairstyles and protective hairstyles” as traits protected against discrimination in Louisiana

ACT 436 (HB 129) by Rep. Richard Nelson
MTR VEHICLE/DRIVER LIC: Provides relative to an arrested person’s failure to honor a written promise to appear

ACT 331 (HB 317) by Rep. Matthew Willard
INSURANCE/POLICIES: Provides for hurricane, named storm, and wind and hail deductibles
ACT 272 (HB 360) by Rep. Stephanie Hilferty  
CHILDREN’S CODE: Provides for the continuous revision of the Children’s Code

ACT 487 (HB 648) by Rep. Stephanie Hilferty  
CRIMINAL/VICTIMS: Provides relative to the Crime Victims Reparations Act

ACT 389 (HB 682) by Rep. Chad Brown  
INSURANCE DEPARTMENT: Provides for a claims adjuster database (OR +$213,302 SG EX See Note)

ACT 652 (HB 1065) by Rep. Candace N. Newell  
ELECTIONS/POLLING PLACES: Provides relative to notice of changes to polling places

ACT 262 (SB 174) by Sen. Mike Reese  
BANKS/BANKING: Provides relative to shareholder remedies within the state banking code (8/1/22)

The following reports include research for issues UWSELA’s Public Policy Committee advocated for during the 2022 Regular Legislative Session:

ALICE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT TOOL – EXPLORING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP BY DISTRICT  
While the Federal Poverty Level is the basis for many public programs, looking at poverty alone excludes the 35 million households in the U.S. who are considered ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), earning above the poverty level but below the basic cost of living in their communities. This interactive tool helps policymakers and community stakeholders better understand how many households are actually struggling in their district.  
unitedforalice.org/legislative-district-tool

United Against Domestic Violence  
unitedwaysela.org/2022-united-against-domestic-violence-case-book

A Recovery Agenda for Louisiana – Louisiana Budget Project (LBP)  

Ready Louisiana Coalition 2022 Legislative Joint Statement  
readylouisiana.org/ready-la-2022-regular-session

LOUISIANA SUSPENDED – Louisiana Appleseed  
unitedwaysela.org/sites/unitedwaysela.org/files/Appleseed_Report_FINAL.pdf