

2026 POLICY AGENDA

Driving Policy Solutions that Strengthen Economic Security for Families and Children



STRENGTHEN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Prioritize the Early Childhood Endowment, eliminate the Care4Kids waitlist, raise 0–3 rates, and implement prenatal-to-three developmental screening to stabilize providers and ensure families can access affordable, high-quality early care and education.

ESTABLISH THE CT CHILD TAX CREDIT

Enact a permanent, refundable \$600-per-child CT Child Tax Credit to provide flexible, reliable income for 250,000 households, including 350,000+ children -- helping working families manage the cost of raising children while strengthening the state economy with an estimated \$414M in annual economic output.

SECURE NO-COST SCHOOL MEALS

Provide free lunch for reduced-price-eligible students and free breakfast for all to reduce food insecurity and ensure every student has the nutrition they need to learn and thrive.

ADVANCE EQUITABLE SCHOOL FUNDING

Index the ECS foundation to inflation to fully fund schools and prevent cuts or added local tax burdens.

PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Ease benefit cliffs in Care4Kids, TANF, and SNAP with phased transitions and hold-harmless protections, and safeguard SNAP, WIC, and health care through state action and emergency funding to help families maintain stable access to essential programs and break the cycle of poverty.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

BEYOND OUR IMMEDIATE LEGISLATIVE GOALS, WE ARE COLLABORATING CLOSELY WITH PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS THESE CRITICAL ISSUES

- 1 Early Care and Education:** Strengthen, stabilize and grow the childcare sector to improve equitable access for families, improve quality of care and workforce pathways, and bolster economic stability for all licensed family child care and center-based providers.
- 2 Education and Workforce Development:** Invest in K–12 education, workforce pathways, and Community Schools to ensure all youth are engaged, supported, and prepared for success in Connecticut's evolving economy.
- 3 Health, Food and Nutrition Security:** Protect and strengthen healthcare and food and nutrition programs and policies that provide relief now and build a thriving, resilient future.
- 4 Economic Mobility:** Promote fair and affordable housing, high-road jobs, lower utility costs, and tax relief for ALICE families and individuals.

United Way Coastal and Western Connecticut works to stabilize households by meeting urgent basic needs while advancing long-term, equitable systems change. With 42% of households living at or below the **ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) **threshold**, our policy agenda prioritizes solutions that strengthen economic security, improve health outcomes, and expand educational opportunity. Through advocacy, collective impact, and targeted investments, we focus on both immediate relief and structural reforms that address root causes. Our goal is a region where every person has the opportunity to thrive.