

# UNITED WAY OF GREATER TOLEDO

## 2010-2012

### PUBLIC POLICY PLATFORM



United Way  
of Greater Toledo

United Way of Greater Toledo (UWGT) strives to improve the lives of individuals and families in Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa counties. With a focus on community impact, UWGT plays a critical role in advocating for good public policy. We develop strategic partnerships which include local, state, and federal governments, along with the private and nonprofit sectors in an effort to change systems and address issues at their root causes.

#### **Public Policy Vision Statement**

To establish United Way of Greater Toledo as a valued leader and vital resource for representatives of local, state, and federal government in the development and enactment of legislation, regulations, and procedures that are beneficial to the citizens of Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa counties, as well as to United Way and its constituents. By positioning itself as a non-partisan convener, facilitator, and coalition builder UWGT will bring stakeholders together to listen and create achievable policy solutions to community problems.

#### **Public Policy Rationale**

We recognize our civic obligation to use our experience and knowledge to help inform policy-makers' decisions regarding policy and funding of health and human service programs. Under the guidance of our Public Policy Advisory Council, UWGT advocates for local, state, and federal policies that advance the common good through education, income, and/or health.

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## Leadership Priorities

### **Promote Kindergarten Readiness**

UWGT supports a comprehensive set of public policy advocacy priorities that increase opportunities for children to receive high quality early care and education from birth to age six.

*UWGT supports public policy advocacy that:*

- Provides voluntary access to high-quality early care and education programs for all children in Ohio in any appropriated setting designed to meet families' unique needs.
- Supports program practices which are developmentally appropriate for each age level.
- Strengthens quality early care and education services that engage parents in their child's early learning and development.
- Increases parents' understanding of the importance of early learning and helps them seek out educational opportunities that enrich their child's life and enhance their parenting skills.

### **Promote K-12 in and out-of-school-time programs**

Promote the academic and non-academic needs of children. Through partnership, communities are able to transform their neighborhood school into a place that is able to meet multiple needs and aspirations of students and families.

*UWGT supports public policy advocacy that:*

- Transforms school buildings to have an integrated focus on academics, education and family support, health and social services, youth and community development along with engagement.
- Broadens public understanding and development of sustainable sources of funding for *Schools as Hubs*.
- Promote social emotional learning.
- Increases age-appropriate out-of-school time opportunities, giving youth the experiences and skills needed to succeed in schools and be prepared for post secondary education, work, and life.
- Encourages greater parent engagement and student involvement in schools.
- Supports Toledo's 5 Grad Now strategies to improve high school graduation and post-secondary readiness outcomes – Community Engagement, Early Warning Systems and Interventions, Mentoring, Parent and Family Engagement, and Post-Secondary and Career Readiness.

### **Increase financial stability for individuals and families**

UWGT recognizes financial instability, whether it's caused by lagging wages, obsolete job skills, illness or injury, or by those seeking to exploit financial hardship for profit, exacerbates the existing community challenges of: scarcity of stable housing, homelessness, domestic violence, student mobility, and inaccessibility to adequate health care.

*UWGT supports efforts that:*

- Improve local, state, and national policies that facilitate increased/sustainable income, decrease debt, build savings, and grow assets for low-income individuals and families.
- Advocate for a coordinated system of workforce development that aligns projected job and enterprise opportunities with post-secondary education or vocational training that will create a workforce equipped to perform those jobs and run those businesses.
- Prohibit opportunistic lending practices like predatory mortgages, payday loans, and other cash advance centers.
- Advocate for programs and legislation that promote affordable housing, housing assistance, and localized autonomy for city governments and agencies to address the most critical needs in their communities – up to and including expanding the definition of “homelessness.”

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## Advocacy Issues

### Prevent and decrease childhood obesity

UWGT is committed to promoting policies that lead to healthy and active children and reduce childhood obesity rates. We recognize this epidemic has the potential to overwhelmingly impact the overall health and economy of our local community and state. We encourage public policy advocacy at the local and state level that supports research-based solutions to the childhood obesity epidemic and provides parents, educators, institutions, and organizations with opportunities to positively affect behavior in children.

### Increase access to healthcare and preventive services

Increasing access to health care for low-income and working families and individuals and maintaining and/or increasing eligibility and services for children and individuals is essential. Our efforts reinforce the importance of early, preventative health care and the need for every individual to have a medical home. UWGT will work with health care systems to educate the public regarding the implications of the Patient Protection and Affordability Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act (new Federal Health Reform Law) and to increase enrollment in CHIP and Medicaid.

### Support and enhance emergency food and shelter

For many years, UWGT in partnership with other Ohio United Ways and United Way Worldwide has been a leader in advocating for those the most vulnerable among us, recognizing before addressing any permanent change in an individual's life, he/she must have food and shelter. We have and will continue to coordinate and distribute Emergency Food and Shelter funds throughout Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa counties. Due to increased unemployment rates and rising costs, we recognize the increase in operating costs and demand on food shelters and food pantries. UWGT will work with local and state groups through public policy advocacy to secure additional funding for basic needs.

## Support Issues

- Support federal efforts to implement a national 2-1-1 system.
- Support increased funding for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA).
- Increase access and efficiency to public transportation.
- Support federal policies aimed at increasing student achievement for K-12 education and college readiness.
- Support programs and services that help individuals and families move toward financial stability.
- Promote local and state disaster and community preparedness.
- Support school-based health and wellness efforts.
- Support regulating payday lending.
- Promote tax credits that support vulnerable families.
- Support ongoing efforts to provide effective and supportive services that inspire and empower older adults to thrive.
- Promote Serve America Act and service projects that meet community needs.
- Increase support of adult literacy and General Educational Degree (GED) programs as a means to promote emergent literacy in children.

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## Our Strategic Approach to Public Policy Advocacy

UWGT has established the following legislative priorities to direct our public policy actions and further our efforts in achieving the goals outlined in UWGT's Agenda for Change.

### Leadership Priorities

UWGT will assume a public leadership role to proactively communicate, educate, and advocate in order to bring visibility and a voice to these issues. We will convene stakeholders, support research, present testimonies, co-sponsor the work of local, regional and/or statewide coalition partners, and mobilize grassroots advocacy efforts. A commitment of financial resources and significant UWGT staff and volunteer time may be considered when addressing issues at this level.

### Advocacy Issues

UWGT will educate and generate the appropriate support on an as-needed basis. The commitment of financial resources is not considered at this level and staff and volunteer involvement occurs in the normal course of business or with special direction from the UWGT Public Policy Advisory Council.

### Support Issues

UWGT will monitor and respond to requests for support through vehicles such as sign-on letters and letters to the editor. Increasing awareness of issues through UWGT web and social media outlets is an option. UWGT may also consider lending its name and reputation to support local, state, and national coalition partners who are the thought leaders on these specific issues. The commitment of financial resources is not considered.

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