**ADVOCACY CALENDAR**

**JANUARY**
- Familiarize yourself with new lawmakers.

**FEBRUARY**
- Sign up for UWSM advocacy alerts and legislative alerts from new organizations to stay up-to-date on important issues!

**MARCH**
- Advocate on VITA Awareness Day March 13!

**APRIL**
- Attend a UWSM Advocacy Training (date TBD). Visit uwsummit.org/events for updates.

**MAY**
- Attend UWSM Lobby Day in Columbus on May 15.

**JUNE**
- Write a letter to your state and federal elected officials to talk about the importance of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

**JULY**
- Attend in-district constituent events with state lawmakers.

**AUGUST**
- Attend town halls or in-district constituent events with U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators

**SEPTEMBER**
- Check with your friends, colleagues and neighbors to ensure voter registrations are accurate. Deadline is October 7.

**OCTOBER**
- Attend a UWSM Advocacy Training (date TBD). Visit uwsummit.org/events for updates.

**NOVEMBER**
- Vote on November 5!

**DECEMBER**
- Join the email lists of your local elected officials, U.S. Representatives, U.S. Senators and state representatives and follow them on social media.
DEAR UNITED WAY OF SUMMIT & MEDINA ADVOCATE,

United Way advocates at the local, state and national level for policies that advance our Bold Goals for 2025, as well as the basic needs of our community. We take on the issues that matter to children and families in Summit County – from expanding early-childhood education to streamlining Medicaid eligibility and reporting requirements to supporting Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA).

Sharing your voice and your story matters. With the right tools, anyone can be an effective advocate for change. In this tool kit, you will find the 2019 UWSM Policy Agenda, information on each policy priority, tips on how to communicate effectively with your elected representatives, sample social media posts, scripts for calling your representatives and a template for writing a letter to your representatives. At the end you will find a list of resources that will help you draft letters, call your representatives, and help you find your local representative’s contact information.

Thank you for volunteering your time to ensure that children and families in our community have the support they need.

Sincerely,

Jim Mullen
President & CEO
United Way of Summit & Medina
WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

ADVOCACY: Public support or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.

WHY IS ADVOCACY IMPORTANT?

• Gives people a voice.
• Legislative action.
• Sometimes legislative action is the only way to accomplish your goal – community and systems level change requires policy.
• Legislative advocacy lends focus to your issue.
• Advocacy creates its own positive publicity. Changing the minds of policy makers.
• Legislative advocacy often gains you powerful allies.
• Positive change in society.
• Group advocacy – strength in numbers!

You have the power to educate policy makers about the importance of issues in your community and to engage them on important issues. Without your help, your elected officials may not realize the importance of these issues and the effects they have in your district. We want to make it easy for you to take action, build relationships with your representative’s office and highlight the advocacy work we are doing in our community.
There are many ways to get involved with advocacy and to educate yourself, members of the community and local, state and federal legislators.

Place a check mark next to the advocacy activities you have been involved with in the past. Next, think about where you would like to take your advocacy work. Remember, United Way of Summit & Medina is here to serve as a resource and to help you advocate on these critical issues to our community.

**MY ADVOCACY CHECKLIST:**
- Signed up for UWSM Advocacy alerts
- Recommended UWSM Advocacy alerts to colleagues and friends
- Sent a letter to your state or federal representative on an issue of importance to UWSM
- Signed up for 2019 Lobby Day
- Attended policy/advocacy training hosted by UWSM
- Helped find local stories from the community to share with UWSM and use to reach elected officials
- Shared advocacy alerts on social media via Facebook or Twitter
- Attended a town hall meeting or constituent coffee held by a local, state or federal policymaker
- Made a phone call or sent an email to a local, state or federal policymaker on a UWSM issue
- Met with staff of a local, state or federal policymaker on a UWSM issue

**GOALS:**
List your top three advocacy activities you will get involved with in the coming year:

1. __________________________________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________________________________
ENSURING CHILD & YOUTH SUCCESS (BOLD GOAL 1)

LOCAL: Maintain relationships and partnerships with local governments in Summit County to maximize the benefit of United Way in the community.

STATE: 1. Expand access to high-quality, affordable, early-learning experiences.
2. Advocate to keep the Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) Five Star Quality rating system and work toward a more equitable process for community-based programs to participate.
3. Explore the expansion of Imagination Library statewide.

FEDERAL: Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies.

EARLY COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS (BOLD GOAL 2)

LOCAL: Maintain relationships and partnerships with local governments in Summit County to maximize the benefit of United Way in the community.

STATE: 1. Expand access to affordable higher education.
2. Advocate for consistent standards for multiple pathways to graduation.
3. Advocate for effective out-of-school opportunities for career connected learning readiness. Encourage support for funds for trade schools and apprenticeships working with the Ohio Department of Education and JobsOhio.

FEDERAL: Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies.
PROMOTING FINANCIAL STABILITY & INDEPENDENCE (BOLD GOAL 3)

**LOCAL:** Maintain relationships and partnerships with local governments in Summit County to maximize the benefit of United Way in the community.

**STATE:**
1. Support funding for government programs that offer a transitional lifeline for families in financial hardship.
3. Explore state funding for additional financial empowerment services.

**FEDERAL:** Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies including Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), Child Tax Credit (CTC), potential changes to the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

PROMOTING HEALTHY FAMILIES AND ADDICTION RECOVERY (BOLD GOAL 4)

**LOCAL:** Maintain relationships and partnerships with local governments in Summit County to maximize the benefit of United Way in the community.

**STATE:**
1. Advocate for increased funding to local communities for treatment and recovery providers addressing the addiction epidemic.
2. Advocate for stable Medicaid eligibility and limit reporting requirements.
3. Expand access to affordable, quality healthcare for children and adults, ensuring that changes in our healthcare laws improve on existing healthcare coverage and reduce health disparities.

**FEDERAL:** Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies.

STRONG COMMUNITIES/BASIC NEEDS

**HOUSING SERVICES:** Advocate for increased rapid rehousing funds that will allow communities to respond to the growing number of Category 1 homeless.

**2-1-1:** Promote 2-1-1 as a highly effective system for community resource navigation and a good co-investment for government funding streams to help address population health, addiction recovery, disaster response, and basic needs.

**2020 CENSUS:** Support the efforts of local governments and community partners in Summit County to ensure a complete count of all residents.
ENSURING CHILD & YOUTH SUCCESS
BOLD GOAL 1

LOCAL: Maintain relationships and partnerships with local
governments in Summit County to maximize the benefit
of United Way in the community. Equip all local officials with accurate
data and inform them of where they can access the most current and accurate data.

STATE: 1. Expand access to high-quality, affordable, early-learning experiences.
     - In Ohio, only 40% of kindergartners come to the classroom ready to learn. 22.4%
of children age 0-5 in Summit County are living in poverty.
   - 90% of brain development happens in the first 5 years of a child's life.
     - High-quality birth-to-five programs for underserved children can bring back a
       13% return on investment.
   - Long-term benefits of high-quality pre-school include:
     - More likely to find and hold living-wage jobs
     - More likely to be in good health
     - Less likely to be involved in criminal behavior

2. Advocate to keep the Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) Five Star Quality rating system and
work toward a more equitable process for community-based programs to participate.
   - SUTQ is a five-star rating system jointly administered by the Ohio Department of
     Education and the Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, but it can be a
     financial and administrative burden on community-based programs to participate
     in SUTQ.
   - SUTQ recognizes and promotes learning and development programs that meet
     quality program standards that exceed preschool licensing and school age
     child health and safety regulations
     (site: http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Step-Up-To-Quality-SUTQ)
   - SUTQ program standards have four main domains:
     - Learning and Development
     - Administrative and Leadership Practices
     - Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
     - Family and Community Partnerships
3. Explore the expansion of Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) statewide.

- Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth until they begin school, no matter their family's income.
- Statewide expansion would benefit children throughout the state of Ohio; currently UWSM provides books to over 14,000 children in the county.
- A 2014 Syracuse report found longer exposure to the DPIL was associated with increased reading frequency and increases in parents engaging their children while reading by talking and asking questions about the story.
  - Other state-wide programs include Tennessee and North Carolina.

**FEDERAL:** Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies.
LOCAL: Maintain relationships and partnerships with local governments in Summit County to maximize the benefit of United Way in the community.

STATE:  1. Expand access to affordable higher education.
   - According to the U.S. Department of Education a postsecondary credential has never been more important.\textsuperscript{ii}
     - By 2020, an estimated two-thirds of job openings will require postsecondary education or training.
   - Making access to higher education affordable could help to create a more level playing field for children of all socioeconomic backgrounds.
   - Ohio has dropped to the bottom 5 states in need-based grants.

2. Advocate for consistent standards for multiple pathways to graduation.
   - Temporary Ohio law provided additional graduation options for students in the class of 2018, specifically, students who entered grade 9 between July 1, 2014, and June 30, 2015. Recent legislation extended additional graduation options to the classes of 2019 and 2020.\textsuperscript{iii}
   - For the class of 2021 students will be required to meet one of the three original pathways to graduation.

3. Advocate for effective out-of-school opportunities for career connected learning readiness. Encourage support for funds for trade schools and apprenticeships working with the Ohio Department of Education and JobsOhio.
   - Connecting students with out-of-school opportunities gives them a leg up when they graduate from high school, especially for students who leave school and immediately enter the workforce.
   - The College and Career Academies at Akron Public Schools current connects high school students with training in their future field. Working with JobsOhio could offer a solid next step for students as they prepare for life after high school and entering the workforce or future education.

FEDERAL: Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies.
PROMOTING FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

BOLD GOAL 3

LOCAL: Support funding for government programs that offer a transitional lifeline for families in financial hardship.
- Work with Summit County representatives to advocate for continued funding for another Financial Empower Center.
- Transitional programs are vital for UWSM clients as they work toward self-sufficiency.
  - Most government program recipients work or are unable to work.
  - 70% of SNAP participants are families with children.
- Additional funding for financial empowerment will allow financial coaches to recruit and train more volunteers to do VITA and EITC training and submissions.

STATE: 1. Advocate for state refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- To qualify for EITC you must have earned income from working for someone or from running or owning a business and farm and meet basic rules. And, you must either meet additional rules for workers without a qualifying child or have a child that meets all the qualifying child rules for you.
- All Ohioans who receive the federal EITC would receive the Ohio EITC.
  - The current Ohio EITC is 10% of the federal, which is lower than other state EITCs.
  - Should be refundable because it’s not impacting individuals returns because their tax liability is lower than what their refund would be.
- Research indicates that families mostly use the EITC to pay for necessities, repair homes, maintain vehicles that are needed to commute to work, and in some cases, obtain additional education or training to boost their employability and earning power.

2. Explore state funding for additional financial empowerment services.
- Work with our local and state representatives to advocate for funding for additional financial empowerment services.
- Leverage relationships with local officials, state representatives and the Ohio State Treasurer to advocate for funds.
- United Way’s Financial Empowerment Center has seen over 500 clients with just 3 coaches.
  There is currently a one month wait for an appointment, additional funding would allow for more coaches to be hired and more clients to be served.

FEDERAL: Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies.
LOCAL: Advocate for increased funding to local communities for treatment and recovery providers addressing the addiction epidemic.
- Ohio received $71.5 million in federal funds for the opioid crisis in September of 2018.iv
  - Of that $71.5 M, $16 million will enable 55 community health centers, academic institutions and rural organizations in Ohio to expand access to integrated substance use disorder and mental health services.
- Summit County relies on local agencies to provide addiction services; those local agencies rely on state and federal funds to continue treatment.

STATE: 1. Advocate for stable Medicaid eligibility and limit reporting requirements.
- Medicaid Extension provides health insurance for over 650,000 Ohioans. United Way supports the continuation of the Medicaid Extension, making healthcare accessible and affordable to adults working in low-wage jobs and their families.
- Medicaid funding is vital for drug and addiction recovery.
  - More than $55 million coming to Ohio will help to increase access to medication-assisted treatment using the three FDA-approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder.v
  - Rather than promote work, new reporting requirements worsen economic prospects.
    - When Arkansas implemented reporting requirements, 18,000 people lost health coverage.
    - Reporting requirements place hurdles in front of those who are willing and able to work, including time limits for reporting, lack of internet access, and lack of reliable access to a computer to file their required forms.

2. Expand access to affordable, quality healthcare for children and adults, ensuring that changes in our healthcare laws improve on existing healthcare coverage and reduce health disparities.
- Lack of health equity is increasingly affects the bottom line for medical centers, insurers, policy makers, and for the patients.
- Currently Ohio provides continuous eligibility for Medicaid, but not CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program).vi

FEDERAL: Follow the lead on United Way Worldwide policies.
2-1-1:
• The entry point to services in Summit County for nonprofit, government and faith-based services for any age groups and need. 2-1-1 helps organizations in our community operate more efficiently by helping direct people to their services.
• The 2-1-1 database has over 1,100 agencies with 10,000 services for Summit County residents and is maintained by dedicated staff.
• More funding for 2-1-1 will allow people more resources available to help those in need.

HOUSING SERVICES:
• In Summit County, 700 individuals per year are processed through central intake for housing. The need for additional funding will help leverage capacity in the community for these requests.
• In 2015, the homeless count in Summit County was 760 people. Thanks to continued government funding, this number decreased to 587 in 2018.
• 18 months after initial housing assistance, 87% of Category 1 homeless are retaining permanent supportive housing.

2020 CENSUS
• A complete count of all Summit County residents is critical for the well-being of the community and the resources we’re eligible to receive.
• An accurate census helps ensure fair representation at all levels of government.
• The census directly impacts the funding your city will receive over the next decade.
• The census provides the most reliable and complete data for research, decision making and planning for both the public and private sectors.
1. **Know how to reach them.**
   Be sure to get your legislators’ telephone, address and e-mail. Even if you have this information, it wouldn’t hurt to double-check in early January since legislators are sometimes assigned new offices after each election.

2. **Find out the best time to reach them.**
   Ask them when they’re most likely to be in their office. It will, of course, depend on their committee assignments. As a rule, early morning and late afternoons are the best times to catch a legislator in his or her office.

3. **Remember calls or emails are better than letters.**
   The legislative process is very fast paced. Legislation can be introduced and voted on in committee within 24 hours. If you want your legislators to know how you feel about a bill, don’t assume you have time to write a letter. Call or email their office immediately.

4. **Be specific.**
   Always provide the bill number, author of the bill and a summary of what the bill’s about when you contact them. In addition, to the extent possible, let them know how the legislation will impact you, your family and your community.

5. **Be concise.**
   Remember, legislators are inundated with letters and phone calls from lobbyists and constituents. Your message, whether it’s communicated orally or in writing, should be brief and to the point. Try to keep anything you write to no more than one page.

6. **Stay in touch over the weekend and attend in-district events.**
   Away from the hustle and bustle of D.C. or Columbus, they won’t be as pressed for time and will be able to listen more attentively.

7. **Don’t expect them to be an expert on every bill.**
   It’s impossible. Each session, more than 1,000 bills and resolutions are introduced. If your legislator’s not familiar with the bill you’re talking about, don’t be surprised or offended. It may be the first time they’ve heard about it. You can be the expert on your issues.

8. **Don’t forget to say “thank you!”**
   Legislators, like mayors and council members, appreciate positive feedback, so look for opportunities to give them a pat on the back, especially publicly.

9. **Remember: YOU ARE THE CONSTITUENT!**

10. **Follow up!**
    Always send an email thanking your representative for taking the time to meet.
Hi, my name is [NAME] and I’m a constituent of [city/town or residence].

I’m calling to express my outrage that our state has chosen to impose work reporting requirements for Medicaid, making it harder for individuals to report their status or progress while trying to get access to healthcare. Reporting requirements will only worsen poverty in our state while creating a greater administrative burden for our state Medicaid office.

Thank you for your time and attention.

(Full Name), 1234 First Street, Akron, Ohio, 12345. (555) 555-5555.
Hi Representative _______________, I’m here to discuss expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, often called the EITC. The EITC is a huge boost to the working poor, who often rely on their EITC to bring them above the poverty line. In addition to being a financial boost for working people, the EITC boosts the local economy. Research has shown that the EITC encourages work, reduces poverty and leads to long-term gains in child health and academic success. We need to look at ways to grow EITC funding and access so more families can continue to grow financially.
The Honorable (full name)  
United State Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

The legislation addressing (describe issue concisely, or use exact name of bill before legislature) is of paramount interest to me because I am a (Certified Academic Language Therapist, parent, teacher, etc.) This issue directly impacts (my students, my profession, the way we as professionals will be able to function effectively, my child, etc.)

I am primarily concerned about (describe major specific concern within the larger issue) because (state reasons or examples briefly, with only as many relevant details as necessary to make your point clearly.) Other aspects of this same issue that affect (my student, profession, child) are (describe briefly and secondary concerns and supporting situations, reasons, examples, etc.)

Although I have read reports of your position in the newspapers, I realize this may not fully represent your viewpoint. Therefore, I will look forward to your reply expressing your opinions, and your current stance on the issue.

Thank you for your consideration of my viewpoint on this matter. I believe it is an important issue, and would like to see the legislation (pass, fail, or be amended) to ensure effective educational services for the students involved.

Sincerely,

Your name,  
Address  
Phone Number  
E-mail Address
TWEETING AT YOUR REPRESENTATIVE IS OFTEN TIMES THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO GET A POINT ACROSS DIRECTLY. TWEETS WITH IMAGES OR VIDEOS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE SHARED AND PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

HASHTAGS TO USE:
- @uwsummit
- #UWAdvocate
- #BoldGoal1
- #BoldGoal2
- #BoldGoal3
- #BoldGoal4
www.5calls.org
5calls will craft a script for you based on the issue you are calling about

How to get an in-person meeting with your Representative

Step-by-step guide to calling your Rep
https://www.ucusa.org/action/phone-calls.html#.XFxQaVVKjIV

United Way Worldwide

Find your Ohio representative
https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislators/district-maps
https://bebusinessed.com/congress-fax-numbers/ohio-fax-numbers/

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT UNITED WAY OF SUMMIT & MEDINA’S ADVOCACY PROGRAM, CONTACT:

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QUICK REFERENCE

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Casey Weinstein (D)
OH House 37
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Bill Roemer (R)
OH House 38
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Kristina Roegner (R)
OH Senate 27
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Vernon Sykes (D)
OH Senate 28
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Marcia Fudge (D)
U.S. House 11
@RepMarciaFudge

Tim Ryan (D)
U.S. House 13
@RepTimRyan

David Joyce (R)
U.S. House 14
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