Advocacy is a vital component in lifting 15,000 households out of poverty and into financial stability by 2028. This public policy agenda represents current positions of United Way of Pierce County as well as supportive positions for the multiple partners leading work to reduce barriers for struggling families or individuals. To tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems we need to collaborate to achieve significant and lasting social change. No single policy, government department, organization or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex problem of poverty.

**TIER 1 PRIORITIES**

**STABLE INDIVIDUALS**

**Washington 2-1-1 [Capital Budget] -** The WA211 network is requesting one-time capital and infrastructure funds for our regional contact centers. While we are grateful for support of our backbone cloud based phone and resource database systems, regional centers have sustained operations with their own hardware, equipment, and office infrastructure. Upgrading capital needs will help improve quality service and transition of center locations. WA211 has only received an award of capital funds once – at launch of our statewide system in 2006.

**STRONG FAMILIES**

**Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)** – **TANF Policy Restoration [SB 6478/HB 2441] -** TANF Washington state protects families with children from the harmful effects of deep poverty with TANF/WorkFirst. TANF provides cash assistance and child care to families while parents participate in WorkFirst, which helps with job searching, training, and addressing barriers to employment. While deep poverty has remained stubbornly persistent in Washington state, the number of families who are able to access TANF has plummeted to an all-time low of less than 25,000 households due to punitive policy changes at the state level during the recession. We support two key restorations of recession-era changes to the program.

1. Undo harsh recession-era policies that keep families from accessing TANF assistance. These include enacting commonsense time limit extensions and easing harsh sanction policies, including full-family sanctions that entirely eliminates a family’s grant when they are in sanction status.
2. Re-instate the Child Support Pass-Through for TANF families, which would allow families to receive a portion of their child support payments currently withheld entirely by the state. Lead agency: Poverty Action Network; Supporting Agency: United Way.

**SUCCESSFUL KIDS**

**The Fair Start for Kids Act - Increase Access and Affordability of High-Quality, linguistically relevant early learning including child care and preschool that meets family’s needs and choices [SHB 2661] –** Affordable and accessible child care helps families by allowing parents to build a career and contribute to our economy, as well as help businesses reduce staff turnover. Children with access to early education programs read earlier, graduate high school at higher rates and have more professional opportunities. Investing $5 million to ensure the Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) can meet the needs of children and families.

1. Fix the Working Connections Child Care co-pay structure so small pay advancements for hardworking families do not lead to large childcare bills.
2. Invest $3 million to fund continuity of high quality child care for families experiencing homelessness.
3. Expand the number of dual language early learning programs so children can receive high-quality early learning in their home language.
4. Prioritize access to high-quality child care for infants and toddlers by increase the Working Connections Child Care reimbursement rate.

**Early Learning Workforce [HB 2556]** in Washington is diverse, qualified and well-compensated. Early care and education providers are adequately resourced to deliver quality care and education. Expand and fund community based pathways so the early childhood education workforce can meet required credentials. *Lead agency:* Early Learning Action Alliance; *Supporting agencies:* United Way, and Project Child Success.

**Eliminate School Lunch Co-Pay for Low-Income Students [HB 1892] -** Kids do better in school when they don’t have to worry about affording meals. Some families struggle even to pay the cost of a reduced-price lunch. By eliminating the co-pay for all students (Pre-K to Grade 12) and increasing the number of schools using Community Eligibility (more students receive free meals), low-income kids can focus on learning, instead of being hungry. *Lead agency:* Bethel School District; *Supporting agency:* United Way.

**TIER 2 PRIORITIES**

**Housing Trust Fund** - This fund invests in affordable homes across Washington, but in recent years it has been considerably underfunded. Funds were approved in the biennium budget and the ask is to provide $10M supplement to the State’s Housing Trust Fund.

**Prevent evictions -** Make landlord / tenant laws more specific to provide tenants and landlords clarity about what is allowable.

**Provide ongoing Housing and Essential Needs (HEN)** - rent subsidies to Pierce County residents who obtain SSI/SSDI and, as a result, are required to give up HENS vouchers worth more than the SSI/SSDI monthly check.