



## 2020 PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

### “UNITED FOR A SAFE & PROSPEROUS COMMUNITY”

#### KIM SPORT, Public Policy Chair

United Way of Southeast Louisiana’s (UWSELA) [Blueprint for Prosperity](#) advances our mission to eradicate poverty and assist **ALICE** ([Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed](#)) households. **ALICE** represents the nearly half of households across Louisiana who work hard, but are unable to afford basic necessities, including housing, child care, health care, food, and transportation.

UWSELA Public Policy Committee’s 2020 Legislative Agenda supported our Blueprint and continued our advocacy for issues that impact **ALICE**. We continued to work closely with individuals, organizations, and coalitions who bring their own passion and years of expertise to the table.

This year’s Louisiana Legislative Session was unlike any other due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic interrupted the session itself, and it also interrupted what bills made it to the floor, with new COVID-19 related bills taking precedent.

The 2020 Regular Legislative Session convened March 9 and was suspended March 16, only five legislative days in, to help stem the community spread of the [coronavirus](#). The Louisiana Legislature gaveled back into session on May 4 with final adjournment June 1, at which time an Extraordinary Session was called. This special session adjourned June 30 after legislators passed a \$35.2 billion state budget that will fund essential services, health care, public schools, and higher education for the next year.

This year was also unique in the spotlight placed on long-standing inequities in our community by the social justice movement sparked by the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and others. United Way of Southeast Louisiana is committed to fight for equitable communities where all individuals are healthy, educated, and financially stable. Promoting equity is at the core of everything we do – including our Public Policy work. We advocate to remove barriers that limit equitable access to opportunity throughout our community.

During session, UWSELA Public Policy participated in virtual meetings to discuss advocacy for education, financial stability, health, and community strengthening issues for our ALICE population. In lieu of in-person testimony, we submitted prepared statements and statistical information with sources concerning priority legislation for committee members’ review prior to scheduled legislative committee hearings.

Thank you to our Louisiana Legislative Champions who supported our efforts in education, financial stability, health, and community strengthening: Governor John Bel Edwards and staff; Representatives Marcus Bryant, Phillip DeVillier, Royce Duplessis, Aimee Adatto Freeman, Ray Garofalo, Stephanie Hilferty, Jason Hughes, Barry Ivy, Ted James, Samuel Jenkins, Edmond Jordan, Jeremy LaCombe, RodneY Lyons, Joseph Marino, and John Stefanski; Senators Troy Carter, Cameron Henry, Cleo Fields, and Beth Mizell.

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

Information on all legislative bills can be found on the [Louisiana State Legislature’s website](#).

# Public Policy Statewide Webinar “COVID-19 Legislation & Implications for Nonprofits”

UWSELA’s Public Policy team held a statewide webinar, “COVID-19 Legislation & Implications for Nonprofits,” including public policy experts Steve Taylor, Senior Vice President and Counsel for Public Policy at United Way Worldwide; Jan Moller, Executive Director of the Louisiana Budget Project; and Tina Vanichchagorn, Special Counsel in Governor John Bel Edwards Office on April 15, 2020. The webinar included an overview of federal bills passed to date, what they mean for nonprofits and the communities we serve, the state budget implications for Louisiana, and a preview of what the 2020 state legislative session may look like.

## EDUCATION

UWSELA played a leading role in the efforts of the Ready Louisiana Coalition to advocate for \$25.1 million to expand access to the Child Care Assistance Program for 4,000 children. We helped organize over 90 organizations to reach out to legislators and educate them about the importance of early care and education and why they should prioritize funding it in the state budget. The Coalition researched potential funding sources the state could put toward early care and education, including dollars from the Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEERs) funds, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds.

While we did not get any new funding for the 2020 legislative session, we:

- Protected the \$18.8 million in additional state funding we received last year for families in the Child Care Assistance Program;
- Saw widespread support for [HB 251](#) to continue the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Commission and create a task force to study sustainable funding streams for early care and education;
- Supported the passage of [HB 64](#), which dedicates a portion of sports-betting tax revenue to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund and moves on to the Governor’s desk for signature; and
- Ensured that family child care policies centered around the health and safety of children, in line with national best practices.

### [HB 64 authored by Rep. John Stefanski](#)

**TAX/GAMING:** Levies an 8% state tax on net revenues of fantasy sports contests, defines net revenues, and dedicates the tax to the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Fund. This bill passed the Senate unanimously! While the estimated revenue from the bill is not great, we recognize this is a step in the right direction.

### [ACT 180 \(Formerly HB 251\) authored by Rep. Stephanie Hilferty](#)

**EARLY CHILDHOOD:** Recreates the Early Childhood Care and Education Commission.

The \$35.2 billion state operating budget approved by the Legislature in the special session includes spending \$2 million to tackle Louisiana’s alarming reading problem for its youngest students. The money will pay for pilot projects aimed at reversing dismal reading rates for students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. Teachers will be supplied with research-based coaching and professional development from 12 literacy coaches—teaching teachers how to teach reading. The \$2 million will also pay for professional development, conferences, materials, and costs to evaluate the pilot projects.

Early care and education is the key not only to ensuring that children get a smart start in life, but the key to helping families achieve security, businesses to stabilize, and our economy to thrive.

**ACT 272 (Formerly HB 474) authored by Rep. Aimee Adatto Freeman**

**TEACHERS:** Provides relative to the training requirements of certain mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. This bill passed on the Senate floor unopposed. This bill will require teachers and school staff to annually complete a simple online training on mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse and neglect. This important training will help keep our children safe, while also protecting teachers by keeping them up-to-date on their responsibilities as mandatory reporters.

**HCR 12 authored by Rep. Ray Garofalo**

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** Directs the Louisiana Workforce Commission and the Board of Regents to study and submit a report to the Legislature relative to funding and programs for workforce development.

**SB10 authored by Sen. Beth Mizell**

**INTERNET:** Brings broadband internet access to underserved rural communities. It passed unanimously in both the Senate and the House. This bill was strongly supported to provide the citizens of St. Tammany Parish and Louisiana with access to this necessary utility. This bill will allow access to rural Louisianans to participate in the digital economy and take advantage of the opportunities broadband brings for better education, health care, and civic and social engagement. This bill was sent to the Governor's desk for signature.

**ACT 215 (Formerly SB 130) authored by Sen. Cameron Henry**

**GAMING:** Provides for a proposition election to determine whether sports wagering activities and operations will be permitted in a parish.

## **FINANCIAL STABILITY**

Between the regular and extraordinary sessions, lawmakers failed to provide Louisiana workers with a minimum wage increase, paid sick days, or better unemployment insurance benefits – Louisiana's are the lowest in the country. We must invest in Louisiana's working families to ensure financial stability so that no Louisiana family is forced to live under the **ALICE** threshold.

**ACT 138 (Formerly HB 328) authored by Rep. Aimee Adatto Freeman**

**TAX/SALES-USE, LOCAL-EXEM:** Authorizes an exemption from local sales taxes for feminine hygiene products and diapers. This bill will allow local municipalities the option to exempt children's and adult diapers, as well as feminine hygiene products from local sales taxes. It carried bipartisan support with 40 co-authors and women's and religious organizations across the state. Former State Senator JP Morrell put years of effort into similar legislation, and this new law will provide a measure of financial relief on essential products.

**HB 70 authored by Rep. Samuel Jenkins**

**TAX/TAX REBATES:** Extends Enterprise Zone Program incentives to essential critical infrastructure workers by authorizing the payment of a one-time hazard pay rebate. This bill was sent to the Governor for signature.

**Front-line Workers...**grocery store employees, nurses, bus drivers and others who stayed on their jobs during the early stages of the coronavirus outbreak will get a one-time \$250 payment, provided they make less than \$50,000 a year and worked at least 200 hours in an essential job during the stay-at-home order.

## HEALTH

We must continue to protect Medicaid for Louisiana families and begin to focus on health outcomes for children by increasing health, safety, and developmental screenings for EVERY Louisiana child.

United Way of Southeast Louisiana's Community Partner, the [Health and Education Alliance of Louisiana \(HEAL\)](#) announced that its work with state leadership to amend the state's Medicaid plan has passed. Prior to the amendment, a Medicaid-eligible child had to have a health service included in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for Special Education for a school to be reimbursed for medically necessary health services. This translated to reimbursement for health services for approximately 12-15% of the student population. Now, student population served has been broadened to include special education students, as well those students with 504 plans and health plans that require a medically necessary health service. It also broadened the type of services and service providers that are eligible for reimbursement. Services such as personal care services and ABA therapy for students with Autism are now included. **What this means for schools is that they will be able to access millions of dollars in federal Medicaid reimbursement for health expenses at no additional cost to the state.** It is a wonderful advancement that has significant implications for the health and education of our children.

### [ACT 269 \(Formerly HB 435\) authored by Rep. Edmond Jordan](#)

**HEALTH/MEDICAL TREATMENT:** Provides relative to nonconsensual pelvic or rectal examinations by health care providers and medical students.



As a member of the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners (LSBME), Kim Sport provided information to the House Health & Welfare Committee in support of [HB 596](#), authored by Rep. Barry Ivy. This bill prohibits nonconsensual pelvic and rectal examinations on patients performed by healthcare providers and medical residents, interns, or students. Watch her testimony [here](#).

### [ACT 304 \(Formerly SB 494\) authored by Sen. Troy Carter](#)

**INSURANCE POLICIES:** Provides relative to coverage for mastectomies and reconstructive surgery. This bill closes a loophole in current law that allows some insurance providers to agree they must cover the reconstruction of a breast which has been preventatively or prophylactically removed, but NOT the actual preventative or prophylactic mastectomy.

At the request of Sen. Regina Barrow, Chair of the **Senate Select Committee on Women and Children**, UWSELA President and CEO Michael Williamson and Executive Vice President and COO Charmaine Caccioppi **provided testimony** on the effects of COVID-19 and struggles of ALICE women and children in Louisiana at the committee hearing on May 29, 2020. Watch [here](#).



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence victims have faced immeasurable challenges in staying safe while navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting stay-at-home orders. An annual report by the Violence Policy Center, “When Men Murder Women,” ranks Louisiana second in the nation in the number of women murdered by men.

### [ACT 101 \(Formerly HB 212\) authored by Rep. Joseph Marino](#)

**CRIME/BATTERY:** Provides relative to domestic abuse. ACT 101 provides the following specific penalties that are applied when the crime domestic abuse battery or battery of a dating partner is committed under the following circumstances:

- When the offense is committed with a dangerous weapon, in addition to any other penalties imposed, the offender shall be imprisoned at hard labor for not more than 10 years.
- When the offense is committed with a dangerous weapon and when the offender intentionally inflicts serious bodily injury, in addition to any other penalties imposed, the offender shall be imprisoned at hard labor for not more than 15 years.

This law further adds offenses committed under the proposed law circumstances described above and domestic abuse battery and battery of a dating partner involving strangulation to the present law list of crimes of violence.

## COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

### Criminal Justice Reform

#### [ACT 98 \(Formerly HB 77\) authored by Rep. Phillip DeVillier](#)

**PARDON/PAROLE:** Provides relative to the supervision and reporting requirements of persons on probation or parole.

#### [ACT 154 \(Formerly HB 602\) authored by Rep. Marcus Bryant](#)

**CRIMINAL/RECORDS:** Provides relative to criminal history record information for the Louisiana Department of Education.

#### [SCR 7 authored by Sen. Cleo Fields](#)

**LEGIS POWERS/FUNCTIONS:** Establishes the Police Training, Screening, and De-escalation Task Force to study and make recommendations to the legislature.

### Foster Care

#### [ACT 69 \(Formerly HB 171\) authored by Rep. Jason Hughes](#)

**CHILDREN/DCFS:** Provides a limited authorization for DCFS to obtain copies of birth and death certificates of certain children and adults.