



United Way of Dane County Public Policy Agenda

2026-2027



Aligned with United Way of Dane County's Plan for Community Well-Being, this policy agenda reinforces the organization's focus on the areas of Youth Opportunity, Financial Security, Healthy Community and Community Resiliency. Through strategic investments and collective impact efforts, United Way and its partners help create meaningful, measurable improvements in the lives of over 82,000 neighbors across Dane County each year. In addition, United Way 211 further supports community well-being as the county's most comprehensive health and human services information and referral resource.

This policy agenda focuses on four priority areas: affordable housing, childcare, healthcare and food security. Each plays a critical role in improving family well-being, addressing current inequities in our human services systems and strengthening community health across Dane County.

Affordable Housing

Expand availability, accessibility, and quality of affordable housing for low-income households, especially families earning 30 percent or less of area median income.

This policy priority aligns with Financial Security strategies in United Way's Plan for Community Well-Being and intends to support policies that

- Support local zoning and financing reforms that make it easier to build more homes of all types and promote accessible housing growth
- Increase investments and incentives for affordable housing development
- Expand eviction prevention and family homelessness services
- Reduce racial and ethnic disparities in homeownership
- Coordinate housing with childcare, employment and health supports

Childcare

Increase access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally responsive childcare and early education for low-income families, supporting both children's development and parents' ability to work.

This policy priority aligns with Youth Opportunity strategies in United Way's Plan for Community Well-Being and intends to support policies that

- Expand public investments and subsidies for affordable childcare
- Increase access to childcare in underserved areas and during non-traditional hours
- Increase compensation and training opportunities for early childhood educators
- Coordinate childcare with housing, employment and health supports

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Healthcare

Protect and improve access to affordable health insurance and quality healthcare.

This policy priority aligns with Healthy Community strategies in United Way's Plan for Community Well-Being and intends to support policies that

- Protect tax credits that serve to keep health insurance premiums affordable
- Expand mental health services for all ages
- Grow and diversify the healthcare workforce
- Coordinate healthcare with housing, employment and childcare supports

Food Security

Ensure access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for all families, especially in underserved neighborhoods.

This policy priority aligns with Community Resiliency strategies in United Way's Plan for Community Well-Being and intends to support policies that

- Strengthen and protect food assistance programs such as FoodShare and WIC
- Expand grocery, farmer's markets and local food access in Dane County food deserts
- Promote culturally appropriate nutrition outreach and education
- Coordinate housing, health and food access policies for holistic community wellness

Intersecting Policy Strategies

Across all four policy priorities in this 2026-2027 policy agenda, United Way of Dane County will engage in the following strategies:

- **Policy Alignment:** Coordinate local advocacy work with federal and state efforts for greater impact
- **Civic Engagement:** Center the voices and stories of people with lived experience in conversations with policymakers
- **Multi-Sector Partnerships:** Collaborate across housing, early childhood education and health sectors
- **Convening:** Leverage the strength and effectiveness of convening existing coalitions and partners to achieve United Way's policy priorities

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