



Connecticut United Ways

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
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Disconnected Youth Report Requires Urgent Action!

United Way of Connecticut endorses proven solutions to address this crisis.

Rocky Hill, CT (October 21, 2024) – The 119K Commission recently published its final report, *Young People First*. Thanks to the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), the bipartisan group of leaders from across Connecticut who served on the commission, the hundreds of stakeholders who engaged in the process, and Boston Consulting Group who was retained by CCM with support from Dalio Education, this report outlines a clear path forward to addressing the crisis of disconnected youth in our state. United Way of Connecticut (UWCT) shares their bold commitment to our young people. Addressing the barriers to their success is vital for our communities and economy.

This crisis is widespread because economic hardship is widespread. Today, more than 564,000 ALICE (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained and **E**mployed) households are struggling across every zip code in our state. The 119,000 young people identified in this report were likely raised in an ALICE family. Without support, they will likely raise their children in an ALICE family, too. Addressing this crisis with focus and urgency can break this generational cycle.

“It’s very well understood that the more stability there is in the family, the better the odds are that that young person will have what they need to find their own path, to address their own challenges, to weather the difficult experiences of adolescence and to make the most of their talents, skills and abilities,” says Lisa Tepper Bates, President and CEO, United Way of Connecticut. “Too many families in our state are struggling financially, including at-risk and disconnected young people who are raising children of their own. The pressure is crushing when you’re so worried about paying the bills, keeping a roof over your head, putting food on the table and keeping the lights on.”

Given the drastic 13% increase in ALICE households since 2019, we’re headed in the wrong direction, and we have no time to lose. The report outlines a comprehensive ten-year plan to cut the number of at-risk and disconnected youth in half, including “ready-to-implement” solutions that Connecticut should prioritize for immediate investment in light of this crisis:

- **Aligned Action 8:** Support an expanded and refundable Child Tax Credit at the state and federal levels to provide families with direct financial support and relieve financial stress.
- **Aligned Action 2:** Establish a critically important integrated case management structure to coordinate the wide range of services a young person needs to thrive across different organizations and sectors, so that these young people don't have to knock on a dozen different doors to find the help they need.
- **Aligned Action 3:** Enhance the 211 system to reduce wait times and provide targeted flex funds to cover gaps in existing services to ensure that this trusted resource keeps young people on track.

Bates shares, "Let's start with what's most urgent. Connecticut should proactively invest in young people's success up front, rather than pay on the back end for incarceration, for substance-use treatment, for mental health crises that could have been avoided if they'd had the tools, stability and support earlier. We need these young people. UWCT is ready to play our role as a partner."

United Way of Connecticut will engage with our coalitions, including the Campaign for Working Connecticut's Opportunity Youth Initiative, to unlock these proven solutions. Together, we can help every young person realize their full potential. It's a win-win and it's urgent.

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ABOUT UNITED WAY OF CONNECTICUT

The mission of United Way of Connecticut is to help the people of Connecticut thrive through trusted partnerships and innovative solutions. United Way of Connecticut has been recognized with two awards from the Hartford Business Journal: 2023 Best Workplace in Connecticut and Lisa Tepper Bates as one of the Top 25 Women in Business 2024. Learn more at ctunitedway.org. Visit our [media center](#) for media requests and inquiries.