United Way Report Finds One in Three Households in Tennessee Struggle to Meet Basic Needs

Sept. 20, 2019, Nashville, Tenn.—Today, United Ways of Tennessee released *ALICE in Tennessee: A Financial Hardship Study*, a report revealing the challenges facing working families who are struggling to make ends meet.

To read an embargoed copy of the report and find county-by-county and town-level data on the size and demographics of ALICE, as well as the community conditions and costs faced by ALICE households, visit unitedforalice.org/tennessee and enter the password LiveUnitedTN.

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed and represents households that are working but cannot afford the basic necessities of housing, food, child care, health care, transportation and a smartphone. The report is a project of United For ALICE, a grassroots movement of more than 600 United Ways and their corporate, government and nonprofit partners that use the same methodology for documenting financial need.

“'The report is the most comprehensive depiction of financial need in our state to-date,'” said Mary Graham, president of UWTN. “Unlike the official federal poverty level, which doesn’t accurately account for local costs of living, our report factors in the costs of housing, food, health care, transportation and other basic needs to determine what it truly costs to live in Tennessee.”

Key findings from *ALICE in Tennessee: A Financial Hardship Study* include:

- Of Tennessee’s 2,589,017 households, 15 percent lived in poverty in 2017 and another 24 percent were ALICE households. Combined, 39 percent (1,017,504 households) had income below the ALICE threshold, an increase of 17 percent since 2007.
- Households with income below the ALICE threshold make up between 20 and 59 percent of households in every county in Tennessee.
- 38 percent of families with children under the age of 18 have income below the ALICE threshold.
- Several demographic groups in our state have lower incomes and are more likely to live in ALICE households, including people of color; women; those identifying as LGBTQ; those with lower levels of education; those with a disability; recent immigrants; younger veterans; and formerly incarcerated people.
More than 40 percent Tennessee’s senior households live below the ALICE threshold (30 percent ALICE, 11 below federal poverty level).

The results of this extensive study are presented in a data-rich website that examines statewide trends, as well as in-depth information for each of Tennessee’s counties at the neighborhood level, with county profiles and interactive maps.

“We will use this information to raise awareness and take action to address the growing ranks of ALICE households across Tennessee,” said Graham. “These working families are doing their part, but as our data makes clear, hard work alone is not enough to survive and thrive. We now have a nonpartisan tool that United Way can use to partner with businesses, government, nonprofits, the faith-based community and our state’s citizens to help struggling families move up.”

To see all of this information and learn more about the report, please visit: http://www.uwtn.org/alice.

The ALICE report for Tennessee was funded in part by the BB&T, First Tennessee, First Tennessee Foundation, and the Tennessee Afterschool Network.

About United Ways of Tennessee
United Ways of Tennessee (UWTN) is the association of 34 United Ways, coming together for collective action to fight for the health, education and financial stability of everyone living in our state. As Tennessee’s leading community solutions provider, we are the driving force behind many initiatives that provide solutions to the most critical needs.

About United For ALICE
United for ALICE is a driver of innovation, shining a light on the challenges ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) households face and finding collaborative solutions. Through a standardized methodology that assesses the cost of living in every county, this project provides a comprehensive measure of financial hardship across the U.S. Equipped with this data, ALICE partners convene, advocate, and innovate in their local communities to highlight the issues faced by ALICE households and to generate solutions that promote financial stability. The grassroots movement represents United Ways, corporations, nonprofits and foundations in Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin; we are United For ALICE. For more information, visit: UnitedForALICE.org or contact Stephanie Hoopes, PhD, National Director, United for ALICE at stephanie.hoopes@unitedwaynnj.org and 302-634-0906.