

For Immediate Release

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Financially Insecure Households Trend Different Directions During Pandemic in Escambia County and Santa Rosa County

Pensacola, FL — The number of households unable to afford the basics grew by more than 3,100 in Escambia County during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. That resulted in more than 58,000 households, 46% of the county's households, struggling to afford the basics by 2021, according to a new report from United Way of West Florida and its research partner United For ALICE.

At the same time, the number of households unable to afford the basics fell by more than 4,400 in Santa Rosa County. But there are still almost 24,000 hard-working households, 36% of the county, struggling with financial insecurity.

These calculations include households in poverty as well as families defined as **ALICE** (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mloyed). ALICE families earn above the Federal Poverty Level but less than what's needed to survive in the modern economy. ALICE is the nation's childcare workers, home health aides, and cashiers heralded during the pandemic – those working low-wage jobs, with little or no savings and one emergency from poverty.

While job disruptions and inflation delivered significant financial pain, a combination of pandemic supports and rising wages did help to blunt what could have been a deeper financial crisis, the report finds. However, as some benefits are peeled back, and inflation persists, signs of greater financial stress are on the horizon.

"It could have been so much worse for these households, whose struggle to feed their families, afford health care and access quality education was often hidden in plain sight until the pandemic," said United Way of West Florida CEO Laura Gilliam. "Equipped with the ALICE name and data, we can do even better to develop effective policies and track our progress toward reducing financial hardship in our community."

ALICE families have been overlooked and undercounted by traditional poverty measures. The Federal Poverty Level is \$12,880 for a single adult and \$26,500 for a family of four. *ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Florida* finds that is well below a realistic Household Survival Budget, calculating the cost to afford the basics for a single adult is \$27,744 and \$64,440 for a family of four in Escambia County. Those numbers are even higher in Santa Rosa County, \$29,904 for a single adult and \$69,168 for a family of four.

To see snapshots of the ALICE Report for Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, visit- uwwf.org/alice. To access online, interactive dashboards that provide data on financial hardship at the state, county and local level, visit unitedforalice.org/county-reports/florida

About United Way of West Florida

United Way of West Florida is a local 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that unifies nonprofit agencies, organizations, businesses - and people - to fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. With a vision of a community united to create better opportunities for all, United Way of West Florida's mission is to Unite our community and leverage resources to improve lives. For more information, visit uwwf.org.

About United For ALICE

United For ALICE is a driver of innovation, research and action to improve life across the country for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) and for all. Through the development of the ALICE measurements, a comprehensive, unbiased picture of financial hardship has emerged. Harnessing this data and research on the mismatch between low-paying jobs and the cost of survival, ALICE partners convene, advocate and collaborate on solutions that promote financial stability at local, state and national levels. This grassroots ALICE movement, led by United Way of Northern New Jersey, has spread to 27 states and includes United Ways, corporations, nonprofits and foundations in Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawai'i, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Washington, D.C., West Virginia and Wisconsin; we are United For ALICE. For more information, visit: UnitedForALICE.org.