

**For Immediate Release**

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## **New research: 43% of People with Disabilities in Wisconsin are Living in Financial Hardship**

***New report reveals that federal poverty data significantly undercounts how many people with disabilities are struggling to afford the basics.***

**MANITOWOC, WISCONSIN** – The number of people with disabilities in Wisconsin who struggle to afford the basics is far higher than federal poverty data indicates — 43% compared to 16% — according to a new report from United For ALICE in partnership with United Ways throughout Wisconsin, including United Way Manitowoc County.

In 2019, while 16% of Wisconsin residents with disabilities were deemed in poverty, 27% were ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). ALICE households earn more than the Federal Poverty Level (2019 FPL = \$25,750 for a family of four) but less than what it costs to live and work in the modern economy (2019 ALICE Household Survival Budget = \$68,000+). Combined, 43% of Wisconsin residents living with disabilities were below the ALICE Threshold, with income that doesn't meet the basic costs of housing, child care, health care, transportation and a smartphone plan.

“On the 32<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, we see that residents with physical, mental or emotional conditions who are struggling financially are not only being undercounted but underserved,” said United For ALICE National Director Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D. “There is still work to do as having a disability puts individuals at substantial risk for financial instability, more than many other factors. Daily, and even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic, these individuals face barriers to accessing a quality education, secure jobs and critical supports.”

The *ALICE in Focus: People With Disabilities* report and interactive tools reveal that during the pandemic, people with disabilities below the ALICE Threshold were six times more likely to be anxious than those without disabilities.

The new research also shows that outdated federal guidelines prevent the majority of residents with disabilities who are living in financial hardship from accessing critical public assistance. According to the new report, a staggering 81% of residents with disabilities below the ALICE Threshold did not receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The program requires that recipients have income below the poverty level, be unable to work, have a “severe” impairment and have less than \$2,000 in their bank accounts, \$3,000 if they are a married couple.

“Income eligibility requirements for SSI haven't been updated in nearly four decades, which is one of the big reasons why more than 234,182 Wisconsin residents were shut out of receiving a much-needed financial lifeline,” said United Way Manitowoc County's Executive Director, Ashley

Bender. “By using data that takes into account the true cost of living — we can establish critical support programs that truly help.”

Other findings from *ALICE in Focus: People With Disabilities* include:

- Black and Hispanic residents with disabilities — 73% and 56% respectively — disproportionately experienced financial hardship compared to 39% of white people with disabilities.
- Females with disabilities struggled more to afford the basics — 48% — compared to 38% of males with disabilities.
- Wisconsin saw 42% of residents with disabilities below the ALICE Threshold spend 35% or more of their income on their mortgage, plus utilities, taxes and insurance.
- Whether working full or part time, people with disabilities were more likely to be living paycheck to paycheck than those without disabilities: 16% of full-time workers with disabilities were below the ALICE Threshold compared to 12% of full-time workers without disabilities.

Hoopes also pointed out that rates of hardship are likely even higher than could be counted as data is not available for individuals living in nursing homes, correctional facilities and other group settings.

More data is available through the *ALICE in Focus: People With Disabilities* interactive data dashboard, which provides filters for regional and local geographies, age, race, disability status, living arrangements and household work status. Visit [UnitedForALICE.org/Focus-Disabilities](http://UnitedForALICE.org/Focus-Disabilities).

*ALICE in Focus: People With Disabilities* marks the second installment in the *ALICE in Focus* Research Series, which draws from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS). Each installment in the series highlights a specific segment within the ALICE demographic. The first installment focused on children; the next report will feature veterans.

### **About United Way Manitowoc County**

United Way Manitowoc County envisions a community where all people achieve their human potential. United Way’s mission is to improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of others throughout Manitowoc County. For additional information, visit [unitedwaymanitowoccounty.org](http://unitedwaymanitowoccounty.org) or call (920) 682-8888.

### **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 24 states and includes United Ways, corporations, nonprofits and foundations in Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, 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](http://UnitedForALICE.org).