

UNITED WE . | Missouri Town Halls



2023 PROGRESS REPORT

This qualitative research report was originally published in 2021 following the 2020 Status of Women in Missouri research report that provided a quantitative look at women's economic and civic status in the state.

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State Fair Community College
Truman State University

LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Research is at the root of everything we do at United WE. We believe it is the first step to true, sustainable change. It is critical to identify specific barriers to women's economic development and develop smart, practical solutions to overcome them.

In 2020, we implemented a two-prong approach to state-wide research that drives our advocacy agenda in the Midwest, with the goal of identifying the key issues that are impacting women's economic and civic success, including childcare, entrepreneurship, broadband access, health care, paid family leave, and occupational licensing.

First, we conduct quantitative research. We partner with Universities to conduct unbiased data on women across a particular state. The data gives us a clear picture of which issues are most impacting women. These findings are published as Status of Women reports.

Second, we conduct qualitative research. We hold town hall meetings across the state as an opportunity for women and allies to share their experiences. These findings are published as Town Hall research reports with next step recommendations to address the barriers women are experiencing.

As a nonpartisan organization, we use this qualitative and quantitative research to educate elected officials, companies and the general public on the ways women are being held back.

The following report is an update on our Missouri and Kansas Town Hall reports. Progress is noted using a stop light approach:

- **Green** - Significant progress made
- **Yellow** - Some progress made, but more work is needed
- **Red** - Little progress made

None of this research would be possible without our dedicated donors listed below. Thank you for investing in research and the future of women in the Midwest and beyond.

Sincerely,



Wendy Doyle,
President & CEO

UNITED
WE .



Research

+

Solutions

=

Results

CHILDCARE



2023 UPDATE

Childcare has garnered significant media attention and has been the focus of bipartisan legislative efforts. Some important strides have been made with the help of United WE's research and advocacy, including:

- \$78 million boost in funding for Missouri's childcare subsidy program. This funding increases the reimbursement rates to providers with the goal of encouraging child care providers to offer services to low-income and foster families.
- \$56 million dedicated Pre-K programming. The 2022 state budget included an expansion of state-funded pre-kindergarten targeted at households of low-income four-year-olds. The priority is to serve children whose families are at or below 185% of the poverty line.
- Progress was made in building a coalition of stakeholders to advocate in passing a series of tax credits to stabilize the childcare industry. The proposed legislation includes three kinds of tax credits: 1) For donors to child care facilities, 2) for employers who help pay for employees' child care and 3) for child care providers.

- However, much more work must be completed on this critical issue if women are going to be able to maximize their potential in the workforce. Additionally, women of color make up the majority of the childcare workforce, making this an equity issue. In addition to advocating for increased funding for childcare and Pre-K, United WE will continue pushing for strategic credentialing frameworks for the early childhood workforce that balances child welfare and workforce development.

In 2022, United WE was granted funding by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation to conduct a two-year nation-wide research study to identify licensing barriers in the childcare industry. [Learn more here](#). The results of the study will be released by early 2024 and supplemented by research in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma on childcare licensing barriers at the municipal and county levels

ELDERCARE



2023 UPDATE

A concerted legislative push has been made to increase funding for long-term care oversight.

Looking ahead, United WE will collaborate with stakeholders, including AARP, to increase the circuit breaker tax credit, which is an important tool that assists elderly homeowners and renters with property taxes. Additionally, we will advocate for allowing SNAP benefits to be used for meals prepared outside the home. Lastly, we believe more paid family leave policies would positively impact the ability of Missourians to care for their elderly loved ones.

PAID FAMILY LEAVE

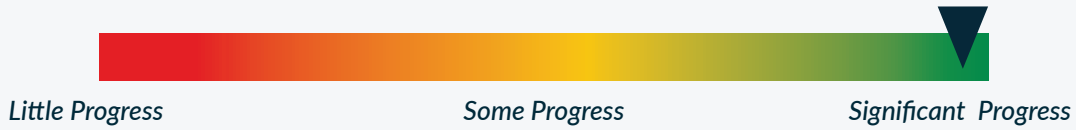


2023 UPDATE

Important work has taken place throughout Missouri in educating policymakers at every level on how critical paid family leave policies are to unlocking women's economic potential. For example, Kansas City recently expanded its paid leave policy, which was the first of its kind in the country for city employees.

United WE will continue working with policymakers on opportunities to establish paid family leave policies and will continue to collaborate with business leaders to ensure our efforts resonate with employers of all sizes.

BROADBAND ACCESS



2023 UPDATE

The State of Missouri awarded roughly \$260 million to 60 recipients, including companies, nonprofits and municipalities, to expand broadband. Projects receiving funds are expected to create more than 55,000 connections in locations that previously lacked adequate internet access.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) announcement that Missouri will receive \$76 million in federal funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, otherwise known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, to expand high-speed internet in rural communities across the state.

United WE will continue educating its audience about broadband funding opportunities and monitoring connectivity due to this additional funding, as access to broadband impacts Missouri women’s ability to seek telehealth services.

HEALTHCARE



2023 UPDATE

In addition to expanding opportunities for more telehealth services, Missouri extended Medicaid postpartum benefits to new mothers. Previously, state law limited Medicaid postpartum care to 60 days. Under newly passed legislation that United WE helped advocate for, that coverage now lasts for a full year – giving mothers more opportunity to treat health conditions and mental health issues.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP & OCCUPATIONAL LICENSING



2023 UPDATE

Occupational licensing is an area where United WE has had several legislative wins, ranging from eliminating regulations that sharply oversaw shampooing and hair braiding to passing reciprocity agreements for military spouses in sectors that require licenses and certifications

In addition, the Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant Program addresses workforce needs by encouraging adults to pursue a certificate, degree, or industry-recognized credential in an area designated as high need. Many of these gaps can be filled by entrepreneurs at all corners of the state.

Stakeholders will also continue pushing for the Right to Start Act, which includes a series of pro-entrepreneur provisions including dedicating five percent of government contracts to small new businesses and spurring new investors in entrepreneurs.

This fall, we are partnering with the Center for American Entrepreneurship on a roundtable with women entrepreneurs to dive deeper into understanding the barriers they face.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



2023 UPDATE

United WE's Appointments Project® has connected 2,500 women with opportunities to serve on civic boards and commissions.

In partnership with MU Extension, we launched SHOW ME R.E.D.I. in February 2022. This 12-week program prepared women for public office through appointments or elected positions.

Additionally, we held a joint event with American Public Square on July 11th, 2023 to dive into the issue of incivility in politics and how it can be a barrier for women when they're contemplating their civic leadership journey.

