

# UNITED WAY OF ERIE COUNTY INVESTMENT MANIFESTO

United Way of Erie County is a local social impact organization on a mission to crush poverty in our community. To best address the root causes of poverty and create positive change that lasts, United Way has evolved from an organization with an isolated impact strategy to one leveraging collective impact. We envision a collaborative community where **all** students succeed and **all** families thrive. There is a bright future for **ALL** of Erie County's children to grow up equipped with the education they need to be successful!

A final step in United Way's evolution is a focused funding framework to strategically direct investment advancing United Way's work to **break the cycle of poverty**. To accomplish this, there must be a **long-term commitment** to proven approaches that result in economically disadvantaged children achieving academic success. With limited resources, the focus must be on solving issues, not managing them with constantly changing approaches.

Rather than shifting funding from program to program through periodic grant cycles, United Way is implementing proven and consistent **evidence-based** efforts to effect long-term sustainable outcomes. With an unwavering focus on **student success and family stability**, positive outcomes will be realized that will impact not only children and their families, but the entire Erie community.

Student success and family stability are intertwined. It is well documented that what happens in the home environment significantly impacts how children show up to school. That is why United Way's focus on student success is **holistic** and includes resources and supports for families.

Moving forward, United Way will continue to work with everyone in the community who support the mission and can fill resource gaps that complement its approach. Poverty is a **complex social issue** and will take significant effort to crush, but by leveraging resources smartly and working differently, **equity can be realized** and the insidious cycle of poverty in Erie County will be broken.

United Way is investing in leveling the playing field for low-income students and their families who face barriers to success. Simply put, breaking the cycle of poverty means breaking down these barriers. We believe all children should have **equal opportunity** to receive a quality education!

- **IMAGINATION LIBRARY** = providing FREE high-quality, age and developmentally appropriate books monthly to children from birth to their fifth birthday so children enter kindergarten with early literacy skills ready to learn
- **RAISING READERS** = making sure children are reading at grade-level so they don't fall behind and drop out of school
- **COMMUNITY SCHOOLS** = stripping away non-academic barriers to learning that low-income children face, from basic needs to trauma counseling to dental/vision health supports and much more so they can focus and engage in the classroom
- **ERIE FREE TAXES** = helping hard working low-to moderate income families get free tax preparation and take advantage of the earned income tax credit to get financially stable
- **211 HELPLINE** = connecting individuals and families to the help they need when they need it so that the home environment is stable and supported
- **OTHER STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS** = responding in times of emergencies and to priority community needs