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COVID-19 Hit As Record Number of ALICE Families Priced Out of Survival ***ALICE Report: 54% of People Living in Alachua County are Struggling to Make Ends Meet***

GAINESVILLE, FL (April 29, 2020) — When COVID-19 hit, nearly 2.6 million Florida households were one emergency away from financial ruin — a 10-year record high — setting the stage for the unprecedented economic impact of the crisis, according to the state’s latest ALICE Report, released today by United Way of Florida, in partnership with United For ALICE.

Across our six-county footprint, on average, 33% of households are ALICE (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed), meaning everything from child care to health care plague a family’s ability to save for an emergency expense or buy a home, despite holding down a 40-hour-a-week job. The study showed Alachua, Dixie and Gilchrist fell above the statewide average, Alachua and Dixie both with 35% and Gilchrist with 37% ALICE households. Bradford, Levy and Union counties all fell slightly below the statewide average.

“Unfortunately, many ALICE families are financially vulnerable to one emergency, and COVID-19 became that one emergency that has sent many in our community members into crisis mode.” said UWNCF President & CEO, Mona Gil de Gibaja. “Our ALICE neighbors face the greatest financial risks, since many of them are working in the businesses that have closed and have had to layoff or furlough their staff.”

While wages for ALICE workers remained largely stagnant, the cost of the six essentials (housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and technology) grew on average 3.4% annually over the past decade. That’s in contrast to a rate of inflation of 1.8%.

As a result, ALICE households grew to account for 33% of Florida’s households in 2018, up from 22% in 2007. Poverty levels across the state remained largely flat at about 13%. However, on average the poverty level in our service area is 20.5%. The report shows ALICE households were locked out of the boom economy and unable to establish savings due to meager pay raises and inconsistent job hours, schedules, and benefits.

“No matter how hard ALICE families worked, the gap continued to grow between their wages and the cost of basic necessities,” said Gil de Gibaja. “These already fragile ALICE households are now facing an even deeper financial hole due to the state of emergency created by COVID-19.”

This mismatch between wages and costs is revealed by a new measurement debuting in this report, called the ALICE Essentials Index. This Index chronicles how the cost of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care and a smartphone plan rose at nearly twice the rate of inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index.

“The ALICE Essentials Index shows that, through no fault of their own, ALICE families have been priced out of economic stability, setting the stage for the scope of this crisis,” said United For ALICE National Director Stephanie Hoopes, Ph.D. “Using the Consumer Price Index alone to measure inflation provides an incomplete picture of the cost of living, severely underestimating the mounting financial pressures on ALICE families.”

Gil de Gibaja said the report’s findings should be addressed by federal, state and local leaders to identify opportunities to provide solutions that address the unique challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has created for many ALICE families, as businesses and schools remain closed indefinitely.

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The report calls for stakeholders across all sectors to use its findings to remove obstacles to financial stability, identify gaps in community resources and build data-driven solutions to help ALICE families achieve economic stability, bolstering the state's economy overall.

To read a 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 www.UnitedforALICE.org/Florida. Please note, there has been a delay in the website being updated due to a medical emergency within the United For ALICE team. The updated website will be available on May 1, 2020.

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United Way of North Central Florida fights for the health, education and financial stability of every person in our community and has been a staple in North Central Florida since 1957. We serve a six-county area that includes Alachua, Bradford, Dixie, Gilchrist, Levy and Union counties. Since our inception, we have raised nearly \$100 million for the region. Our top priority is to create real social change that leads to better lives and healthier communities for North Central Florida.

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, Hawai'i, 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.