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June 7, 2023

Via Electronic Filing
Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: 2023 Review of All Jurisdictional Fixed Utilities' Universal Service Programs
Docket Number M-2023-3038944

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

Enclosed for filing please find the comments of the Philadelphia Gas Works ("PGW") to the March 27, 2023 Secretarial Letter at the above-referenced docket. This version corrects a PDF error and replaces the previous version, with eFiling Confirmation Number 2478365.

Respectfully,

/s/ Craig W. Berry

Craig W. Berry, Esquire

BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

2023 Review of All Jurisdictional Fixed	:	
Utilities' Universal Service Programs	:	Docket No. M-2023-3038944

COMMENTS OF PHILADELPHIA GAS WORKS
TO MARCH 27, 2023 SECRETARIAL LETTER

I. INTRODUCTION

Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission's 2023 Review of All Jurisdictional Fixed Utilities' Universal Service Programs, Docket No. M-2023-3038944. PGW is in a unique position in Pennsylvania – it is municipally owned and its service territory is limited to the City of Philadelphia; based on the PUC's Universal Service Report, PGW consistently has the highest proportion of residential low-income customers in the Commonwealth; PGW customers pay more than other Commonwealth customers to support PGW's universal service programs (and this does not include electric utility universal service costs that they also pay); PGW's universal service costs are recovered from both residential and commercial/industrial firm rate payers; and finally, PGW has a significant number of customers who are just above the poverty level, with income between 151%-250% of federal poverty level (FPL). Given its position, PGW strongly supports low-income programming and improvements to its programs. As evidence of its continued support, when the PUC issued its new policy lowering customer assistance program (CAP) energy burdens, PGW immediately filed a proposal with the PUC to lower its CAP energy burdens to the new levels. As a result, these lower energy burden levels have been available to PGW customers since September of 2020. Given the importance of this Docket to PGW and its customers, PGW retained the services of Hugh Gil Peach, President of H. Gil Peach & Associates LLC ("Peach & Associates") to provide PGW with input and guidance; Dr. Peach and team focus their research on social and climate policy. They have an extensive, long-term history of testifying in Pennsylvania and across the county in support of low-income policy and customers. This Peach & Associates feedback is included as Attachment A to these Comments.

With respect to universal service program improvements, PGW strongly supports new efficiencies and ways of implementing programs in Pennsylvania. PGW appreciates the opportunity to review these programs using a fresh approach. Before addressing some of these potential improvements, PGW must raise the issue of costs. PGW's programs are paid for by a significant number of low-income and near low-income Philadelphians. While policy should not be based solely on a determination of whether PGW ratepayers can or should bear the costs of the policy/efficiency, this determination should not be excluded from the discussion. PGW supports serious consideration of statewide administration and cost socialization of CAPs and other universal services; and has provided some related cost analysis herein. As an example of potential Commonwealth and customer benefits from statewide administration, is inefficient to continue to operate CAPs external to LIHEAP. Under current Pennsylvania design - unlike in many other states - LIHEAP does not support CAP programs.

II. COMMENTS ON QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE MARCH 27 SECRETARIAL LETTER

As introduced above, PGW contracted the services of Dr. Gil Peach and his team to review the questions raised in the Secretarial Letter and provide relevant research to assist PGW with providing informed comments. In addition to its comments below, PGW submits and supports the response of Peach & Associates as set forth in Attachment A.

1) What regulatory barriers are in place that would prevent utilities from having one utility do intake and then having that information provided to other utilities that provide service to that consumer for the purpose of universal service and CAP enrollment?

Overall, PGW submits that Commonwealth level administration of CAPs would be most efficient. Without this administration, PGW submits that the relevant issues are not regulatory in nature. Instead, PGW believes the Commission should review: 1) implementation costs, 2) cost recovery, and 3) potential for fraud and other related issues that unnecessarily increase costs.

There are certain costs that would be associated with cross utility enrollment such as technology for data sharing and administrative/labor costs. As highlighted in the Energy Association of Pennsylvania's ("EAP") comments, if one utility incurs costs to administer and support another utility's potential CAP customer, whose ratepayers should pay for this work? If the current cost recovery of Universal Service and Energy Conservation Plan (USECP) programs is captured at an individual utility level, this may pose cost allocation issues.

Additionally, Pennsylvania CAP programs can be extremely beneficial financially for enrolled customers (and costly for utility customers). Thus, it is essential to ensure that the programs are operated with significant oversight and discipline. PGW has concerns regarding potential fraud or other costs due to incorrect intake. Currently, PGW manages its CAP program fully in-house, and its program has been designed for its service territory. Each utility's USECP is different, which adds to the complexity of cross-utility enrollment. For example, there are differences such as income qualifications and required documentation. Utilities would require cross-training on each other's USECP, which increases the likelihood of error. And the accepting utility would have no way of verifying if fraud has occurred. Some examples of fraud that PGW has experienced include, but are not limited to, altered income documentation, and applications submitted on behalf of a deceased person.

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) operates and maintains the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for the Commonwealth and is working on a process to transmit data to participating vendors (i.e. utilities) to provide information such as: name and number of household members, income, income source, and verification dates. In light of the current progress of DHS's data sharing proposal, this sharing may present an opportunity to pilot how a data sharing program might work, particularly since DHS has access to verified income data.

2) What regulatory barriers or other obstacles exist if an outside provider does the intake on behalf of multiple utilities serving the consumer and what solutions exist to overcome any barriers?

PGW does not use outside vendors for its intake and processing. PGW's processing of its CAP applications is performed by its union covered employees (Gas Works Employees Union of Philadelphia, Local 686).

If the intake were to be done by an outside provider, PGW believes that this should be done at a state funded and run program that coordinates LIHEAP with CAP. This proposal is addressed further in response to question 5, below.

PGW would also like to highlight EAP's comments that we wish to maintain our relationships with our customers and our programs – in fact, a significant number of our employees are members of the community in which we work.

3) How can consumer consent be built into the intake process that permits the utility doing the intake to provide the enrollment information to the other utilities serving the consumer?

PGW believes that any consent the customer gives to be auto enrolled into another utility's program must be given in writing to ensure the customer is making a conscious and informed decision regarding all of their available options and to provide for a proper audit trail. PGW does not see this as an impediment to cross-enrollment.

4) Is an automatic enrollment program feasible where any mechanism through which an electronic exchange of information between a utility and a state social service agency confirms the eligibility of public benefits whether or not the information is expressly authorized by the household? If express authorization is needed, rather than automatic enrollment, can that express authorization be provided one time in a uniform application rather than on a utility-by-utility basis using separate applications?

Please refer to the Peach & Associates report in Attachment A for a response to this question.

5) Should CAPs be administered statewide across all utility service territories rather than on a utility-by-utility basis? If so, what are the barriers to accomplishing this and what are the benefits and drawbacks to this approach? If not, what are the benefits and drawbacks of continuing to administer the programs on a utility-by-utility basis.

Yes, CAPs should be paid for and administered on a statewide level. PGW recognizes that there may be hurdles to overcome to implement such a program approach. However, the benefits could be significant for the many customers not currently enrolled in Pennsylvania's CAPs, and PGW believes that creative solutions could overcome any hurdles. As currently structured under PUC policy, PGW's customers – many of whom are low or near-low-income - are overly burdened with CAP costs just because they live in the City of Philadelphia. Beyond solving this financial unfairness, statewide administration – or some version of it – would resolve significant CAP administrative inefficiencies.

PGW stresses that any administration of CAPs should include coordination of benefits with LIHEAP. This administration could be done through cross-agency coordination with DHS. PGW submitted similar comments in its comments to the PUC's recent Energy Burden Proceeding[1], stating:

> PGW respectfully submits that LIHEAP funding should be integrated into any new PUC energy burden policy, in order to meet the statutory obligation to ensure that universal programs are operated in a cost effective manner, to make sure that utility ratepayer funds are not used to supplant federal grant monies, and to balance the benefits of energy burden policies against the costs. See 66 Pa. C.S. § 2203(8). Such integration would also ensure that the PUC established energy burden(s) are met.
>
> Historically, LIHEAP cash grants were integrated into CRP. Until 2009, LIHEAP cash grants were applied collectively to the actual, unpaid usage of all CRP customers. . . . Some states apply LIHEAP monies to each individual customer's subsidy. In compliance with current DHS practices requiring that LIHEAP funds be applied to an individual customer's bill, the PUC may determine that to the extent that an individual customer is subsidized by non-CRP customers, the grant could be used to pay for such customer's bill subsidization (with any excess applied against future bills). Such result appears consistent with the Commission's authority to place conditions on receipt of CAP benefits.[2]

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[1] Comments of Philadelphia Gas Works to January 17, 2019 Order (May 8, 2019), Docket No. M-2017-2587711 re: Energy Affordability for Low-Income Customers.

[2] In *Pennsylvania Communities Organizing for Change, Inc., v. Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission,* 89 A.3d 338 (Pa. Cmwlth. 2014), the Commonwealth Court addressed the interplay between the application of LIHEAP grants and ratepayer funded assistance to low-income customers. The underlying Commission Order that was challenged but affirmed by the Commonwealth Court held that:

> It is fully within this Commission's authority and jurisdiction to determine how much a customer must pay while respecting the federal law as to the use and application of the LIHEAP grant to the individual recipient. It is this Commission's responsibility to determine the amount of the CAP customers' bills that it finds to be just and reasonable.

Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission v. Columbia Gas Co., Docket No. R-2010-2215623, 2012 WL 1512158 (Pa. PUC 2012). In that litigation and subsequent cases, the PUC has emphasized that the entirety of the LIHEAP statute, 42 U.S.C. §§ 8621-8630, must be considered if one is calling into question whether the Commonwealth and/or a utility is in compliance with the LIHEAP statute in general and the vendor obligations in particular. *See* NFG ' s 2014-2016 USECP, Docket No. M-2013-2366232 (Order entered February 12, 2015); *see also* Duquesne 2017-2019 USECP, Docket No. M-2016-2534323 (Order entered March 23, 2017).

PGW submits that a statewide program would best achieve the balance between full participation in CAP by all low-income customers in the Commonwealth and the cost allocation to non-CAP ratepayers such as through a pooled rate. Currently, LIHEAP grants are given to eligible customers and are applied to their CAP "ask to pay amount"; this ask to pay amount has been based on the PUC-established affordable energy burdens. A customer enrolled in CAP who applies for and receives a LIHEAP grant reduces their effective energy burden below the amounts set by the PUC.

For example, a customer in a household of 4 who makes approximately $3,500 a month would be at 140% of the FPL. If they were a PGW customer, they would have a 6% energy burden and pay approximately $210 a month under CRP, or $2,520 annually. This energy burden has been deemed affordable by the PUC. The potential LIHEAP Cash grant for the 2022-2023 season was $948[3]. If the customer received this amount, this would be applied to their ask to pay amount and reduce their CRP to $1,572, meaning their effective energy burden would be approximately 3.7%. Because the application of LIHEAP grants lowers the effective energy burdens of some customers and further subsidizes bills that the PUC has already deemed affordable, PGW proposes to apply the LIHEAP grants to each customer's CAP discounts and forgiveness. This approach is consistent with programs in other states. Also, it would lower the burden placed upon the non-CAP customers, many of whom are low-income and not on CAP, or just above the low-income threshold.

These costs are significant when extrapolated across the Commonwealth. Under this proposal, the approximately $391.0 million of Natural Gas and Electric CAP Costs in 2021 would be paid for by the approximately 7.4 million non-CAP customers (7.9 million Total Residential Natural Gas

[3] https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/LIHEAP_BENEFIT_TABLE/

& Electric Customers less 0.5 million CAP Participants) as opposed to each individual utility's ratepayers bearing the costs.[4] Using the numbers above, this would come out to approximately $53 a year that each non-CAP ratepayer would pay to support the existing CAP program statewide. This number would be approximately $46 a year for Natural Gas non-CAP ratepayers if this were calculated on a gas-only basis. This is preferable to PGW given that approximately 48% of Philadelphians are Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) customers and PGW's residential non-CAP ratepayers paid approximately $110 in 2021 to support CAP.

Furthermore, in 2021, Natural Gas and Electric ratepayers received approximate $137.5 million in LIHEAP grants. If LIHEAP grants were integrated into CAP to support these programs, this integration would reduce the costs to non-CAP customers by approximately 35%.

Please see section III below for further discussion regarding expected cost increases Philadelphians would bear if CAP participation is expanded to automatic enrollment for all LIHEAP recipients. For PGW's customers, such expansion - if done under current PUC policy - would present significant increased cost. New policies could resolve these issues.

6) **What changes would be required to EDCs' and NGDCs' existing, Commission-approved universal service and energy conservation programs to incorporate improvements and could changes be addressed in a streamlined fashion?**

PGW believes that a PUC rulemaking would be the most streamlined approach to ensure universal service plan process efficiency. Currently, each utility has its own separate USECP proceeding. Separately, many of the USECP components are also (repetitively) litigated in a utility's base rate

[4] 2021 PUC Universal Service Program & Collections Performance Report.

case proceeding which is costly, and leads to implementation timeline issues and inefficient use of resources.

7) **What additional consumer education and outreach could be undertaken to make more low-income consumers aware of the benefits that may be available to them?**

Please refer to the Peach & Associates report at Attachment A for a response to this question.

8) **Can recertification periods in the existing CAP Policy Statement at Section 69.265(8)(viii) be extended so that otherwise eligible consumers do not lose benefits solely due to the fact that they timely failed to recertify their eligibility?**

PGW supports EAP's comments regarding recertification ensuring the integrity of the programs and controlling costs to best ensure that these programs can continue to benefit Pennsylvanians. Given the costs to other customers and the value of PGW's CAP – which provided $870 of CAP Credits and $230 of Arrearage Forgiveness for each PGW CAP participant in 2021 – recertification is crucial to ensure customers still qualify for assistance. It's a delicate balance to prevent mistakes and fraud, while also maintaining efficiency for the customers.

Further, PGW recently proposed to update its CAP recertification requirement in its 2023-2027 USECP to once every two years, with once every three years if the customer has received a LIHEAP grant.

9) **Can the default provisions in the existing CAP Policy Statement at Section 69.265(9) be modified to reduce the chances that otherwise eligible consumers do not lose benefits solely due to the failure to comply with one of the articulated default provisions?**

Please refer to the Peach & Associates report at Attachment A for a response to this question.

10) Should utilities be required to develop and use standardized CAP forms and CAP procedures? What are the barriers, if any, of establishing a common application?

PGW submits that some uniformity, assuming that it is done in a cost-efficient manner and that the form does not look like a difficult-to-fill-out legal document, could be beneficial. However, PGW utilizes both a paper and web application for customers. PGW has spent significant funding to create online application software for customers to submit their CAP applications (including by phone with photos of documentation). Modification to this online application would likely be costly.

11) What other additions or changes to the existing CAP Policy Statement should be made to increase eligibility, enrollment and maintenance of CAP benefits?

Please refer to the Peach & Associates report at Attachment A for a response to this question.

12) Should the CAP Policy Statement be amended to include jurisdictional water public utilities, and, if so, what barriers if any exist to doing so and how can those barriers be overcome?

PGW does not have comment on this issue.

13) If a coordinated enrollment process could be achieved with respect to CAP, could that same process be applied to identify eligibility for a utility's Low Income Usage Reduction Program (LIURP) or eligibility for receipt of hardship fund grants?

LIURP coordination could be significantly more burdensome and difficult to implement. PGW's LIURP serves the highest users and, given the size of its low-income population, is not undersubscribed. PGW's hardship program is administered by an outside agency that provides customers with a grant that PGW matches, and this program does not use the same criteria as LIURP or CAP.

14) What changes are required to the Commission's existing policies or regulations to incorporate improvements?

PGW is concerned with inefficiencies in the universal service plan process. For example, PGW is currently in the process of receiving final approval of its 2023-2027 USECP and needs time to implement and evaluate its current changes before looking to change its programs again.

III. POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHILADELPHIA RATEPAYERS

PGW is the largest municipally owned gas utility in the country serving approximately 490,000 residential customers. As a municipally-owned utility, all of the funds PGW needs to run the company come from ratepayers or from borrowing (the costs of which then must be paid by ratepayers). PGW must carefully balance the needs of all ratepayers to ensure that the Company continues to be financially solvent to provide safe and reliable gas service. PGW is committed to constantly improving itself to help low-income customers and is proud to note:

- PGW conducts extensive outreach to its low-income customers to apply for LIHEAP - its customers received approximately $46.9 million in LIHEAP dollars during PGW's fiscal year September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2022.
- PGW implemented a free Low Income Smart Thermostat program to install smart thermostats in the homes of low-income customers.
- PGW partners with local neighborhood energy centers (NECs) to assist customers in their own neighborhoods. At each of Philadelphia's eighteen (18) NECs, customers can receive help with billing issues or apply for energy assistance. The NECs also offer budget counseling, energy counseling, energy conservation education, and grant application assistance for the communities they serve.

As discussed above, PGW strongly supports its Universal Service programs since they provide affordable rates and other support for its most vulnerable customers. However, PGW is cautious of any rapid expansion of Universal Service programs that significantly increase the costs borne by its non-CAP customers, many of whom are barely outside of the income qualifications for CAP assistance.

PGW is especially concerned regarding its Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) customers, defined as those earning more than the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to afford the basics where they live. This number is loosely defined as between 151-250% of FPL. As further detailed in Attachment B, approximately 48% of Philadelphians are ALICE customers (23-31% are low-income and 16-25% are just above low-income, using a range between the PUC's Confirmed Low-Income and Low Income Energy Affordability (LEAD) data). This is compared to Pennsylvanians who do not live in Philadelphia at 26% (just above low-income), 12% (low-income), and 39% (collectively, ALICE) respectively across Pennsylvania. Any expansion of CAP participation and its associated costs must take into consideration the impact on the approximately 78,000-124,000 non-low-income ALICE customers (16-25% of its 490,000 residential customers) PGW serves. PGW supports the goal of ensuring that all low-income customers are enrolled in its CAP. However, under current PUC policy and design, a "one size fits all" approach to an expansion of CAP will likely have a disproportionate impact on Philadelphians.

In PGW fiscal year (Sept-August) 2022, PGW's CAP costs were over $73.2 million; PGW's total universal service costs were over $84.2 million. Per the PUC's Universal Service Report, excluding commercial/industrial customers, PGW's calendar year 2021 CAP costs were approximately $48.0 million ($66.1 million total including commercial/industrial) based on average enrollment of 59,139 CAP participants. This level of participation was 48.4% of

Confirmed Low-Income (CLI) customers. Increasing enrollment to full CLI levels of 110,364 low-income customers would bring total CAP costs to approximately $98.3 million ($135.4 million total), plus the additional universal service costs. The average residential customer, including the 124,268 ALICE customers, would pay $260 annually to support CAP. This is an increase from the current $110 annual cost. $260 is a significant sum for a customer just barely above low-income status.

Similarly, increasing enrollment to those who had received a LIHEAP grant within the past 3 years would bring CAP enrollment to approximately 101,862 and CAP costs to $90.8 million ($125.0 million total), almost doubling the existing costs.

As briefly discussed in question #5 above, cost expansion has impacts to not just PGW but to ratepayers across the Commonwealth. There were 463,942 CAP participants across gas and electric in 2021. Full participation at confirmed low-income levels would mean 1,011,226 customers enrolled in a CAP program, an increase of 547,284 low-income customers or 118%. Increasing enrollment levels would have meant an increase in the CAP costs from approximately $391.0 million to $831.4 million in 2021. This would have financial ramifications for the approximately 700,000 ALICE customers who are not eligible for CAP but are disproportionately affected by increased CAP costs.

Given income demographics across the Commonwealth, not all utilities' customers will be affected equally by increased/automatic CAP enrollment. A statewide pooled rate - coupled with the integration of LIHEAP would socialize the costs of CAP and not unfairly burden customers of specific service territory, such as Philadelphia. As stated in question #5, in 2021 the statewide socialized rates would have been $53 a year per non-CAP customer, further decreased to $34 if there was full LIHEAP integration. Under a statewide program, automatic expansion to new customers would be borne by all utility ratepayers.

For PGW, the importance of maximizing CAP participation cannot be understated. However, it must be done in a manner that does not lead to the customers of one utility paying significantly more to support their utility's program just because of where they live. In connection with its analysis of Pennsylvania's Universal Service programs, PGW urges the Commission to consider alternative proposals on cost allocation. Some of these proposals may include but are not limited to: a statewide administration of programs as posed in question #5, the full integration of LIHEAP to support CAP benefits, and a pooled or statewide rate to ensure the burden of the costs are equitable throughout the Commonwealth. PGW recognizes some of these proposals may be outside of the power of the Commission acting on its own and coordination with other Commonwealth agencies may be necessary. PGW submits that now is the time to review alternative solutions to a growing problem.

IV. CONCLUSION

One of PGW's primary goals is to provide <u>affordable energy</u> to its customers. PGW agrees that now is a good time to review Pennsylvania's universal service programs to ensure that they are operating in the most efficient and beneficial manner possible. However, any proposal has a cost and PGW wants to stress the downstream impacts to its vulnerable customers, many of whom do not qualify for CAP but are very close to extreme poverty. PGW respectfully requests that the Commission carefully consider the proposals set forth in these Comments to ensure this balance between costs and CAP participation.

Attachment A

Analysis by Peach and Associates, LLC

Response to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

Request for Comments on Universal Service Programs

H. Gil Peach, PhD

June 7, 2023

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Response to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission has requested comments (Pennsylvania Bulletin, Vol. 53, No. 18, Pp. 20, Pp. 2022-2024, 2023 Review of All Jurisdictional Fixed Utilities Universal Service Programs) from all interested parties on several topics. The goals of this request are to seek comments on how the Commission's regulations, policies, and procedures could be revised with a focus on:

(1) Increasing program coordination among all utilities,
(2) Streamlining the eligibility and enrollment process,
(3) Reducing the number of otherwise eligible consumers from losing low-income benefits due to the verification or re-enrollment process.

Below are initial responses in a Q & A format. Following a general statement to put forward considerations of context and balance, we address each topic individually, in the order presented by the Commission.

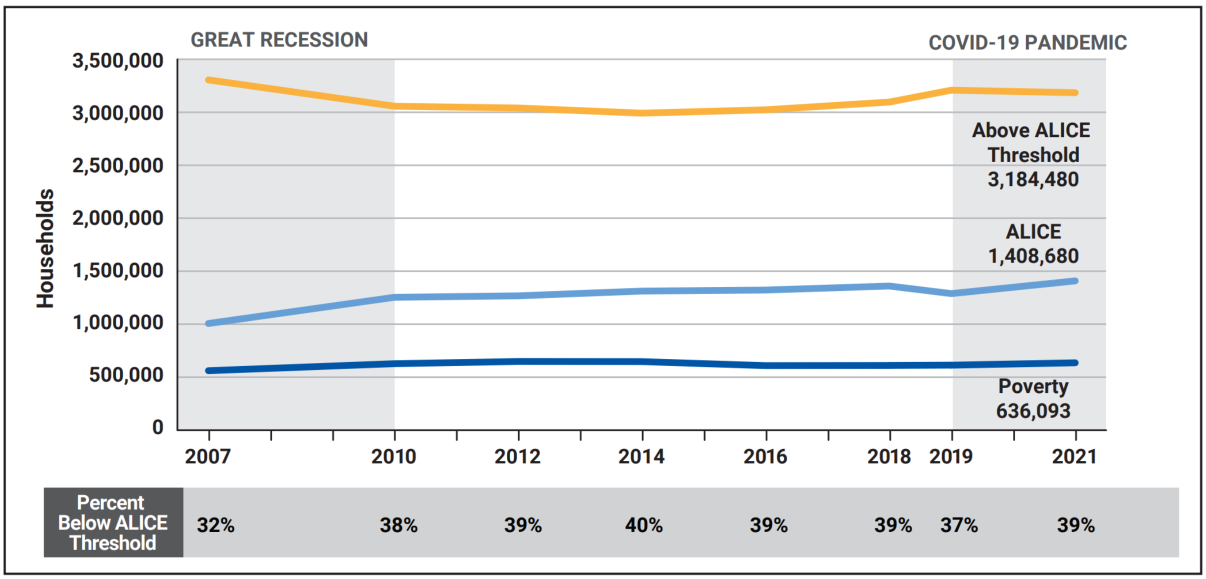
General Statement: Since the early 1970's, the earlier strong trends towards increasing economic equity that began during the Great Depression and were reinforced in the patriotic WWII years (including introduction of Social Security, and other social programs, growth of labor unions, corporate commitment to serve not only investors and owners, but equally workers, and the general social welfare) have gradually weakened and, in many cases have been replaced by counter tendencies. Unless income is allocated so that households can afford the increasingly rising costs of essential goods and services (food, housing, water, natural gas, electricity), the ALICE proportion of our population will continue to rise.

Since the income inequity problem is not currently being solved on the income side and income inequality is growing, this leaves gas, water and electric utilities serving a high and increasing proportion of residential households who are ALICE customers. Currently, ALICE translates to about 250% of the federal poverty level.

Poverty analysts use 250% of poverty and ALICE interchangeably. Just as in the 1960's the federal government poverty level was relevant (100% of poverty), and then in the 1990's the 150% of federal poverty level was relevant, today the boundary between poor and non-poor is at approximately 250% of poverty at a practical level.

In the figure below, taken from the most recent ALICE study for Pennsylvania (released in April 2023), we see that Pennsylvania has about 1,408,680 households at or below the ALICE level (or 39% of Pennsylvania households). Of these, 12% are at or below 100% of the federal poverty level and 27% are in the ALICE range but above the federal poverty level. This means that 61% of Pennsylvania households are above the ALICE level.[1]

Figure 1: Households by Income, Pennsylvania, 2007-2021.



Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2007–2021; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2021

How is this distribution changing, going forward into 2024? With reference to this figure, the 2023 ALICE Study for Pennsylvania (p. 6) states:

> Between 2018 and 2019, the number of (Pennsylvania) ALICE households had just started to decline. However, by 2021, that number increased again, to a level higher than before the pandemic.

[1] United Way of Pennsylvania, ALICE in the Crosscurrents, Covid and Financial Hardship in Pennsylvania, 2023 Report. (https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-reports-mobile)

The percentages vary by county. For Philadelphia, ALICE data shows 48% of Philadelphia households are ALICE households (figure below), with 22% at or below the federal poverty level, 28% ALICE above the federal poverty level, and 52% of households who are not poor (using the ALICE definition, which is current for today's economic conditions). These percentages are for all households in Philadelphia and are from the 2023 Alice study.

PHILADELPHIA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Total Households:	660,921
Poverty:	145,490 (22%)
ALICE:	170,694 (26%)
Above ALICE Threshold:	344,737 (52%)

Figure 2: ALICE in Philadelphia.

Using Low Income Energy Affordability (LEAD) data tool sponsored by the US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of State and Community Energy Programs, we calculate that there are 89,972 natural gas heated households in Philadelphia at or below 100% of poverty, another 46,138 from 101% to 150% of the federal poverty level, and another 29,023 from 151% of the federal poverty level to the approximately 250% of poverty level represented by ALICE. In terms of percentages, approximately 31% of gas heated homes are within the 150% poverty limit for the Customer Responsibility Program (CRP), and another 16% of gas heated Philadelphia households are within the ALICE limit. This gives 47% of gas heated households within ALICE and 53% above ALICE, a very close approximation the 48% vs. 52% found in the ALICE data for Philadelphia households, overall.[2]

ALICE households are defined as Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. They have income above the Federal Poverty Level *but below the basic cost of living*.

[2] LEAD information and data is at: https://www.energy.gov/scep/slsc/low-income-energy-affordability-data-lead-tool.

Any increase in the number of households at or below 150% of poverty being subsidized by utility payment assistance programs or through utility-funded weatherization programs means that additional cost (beyond the cost of a household's own energy use) is created. These additional costs are assigned across customers, including ALICE customers. *This is a balancing factor to be carefully considered in resolving answers to the topic questions.* The number of ALICE customers is *gradually increasing*, and the rate of increase can be expected to increase.

Assessment of extra payment liabilities to ALICE customers above 150% of poverty to cover the more extreme inability to pay of the poorest customers is both a substantive and an ethical problem. *To what extent should working poor (ALICE) households be assessed additional costs to cover the full bills of even poorer households?*

We now also must consider the continuing and increasing current and anticipated shocks of inflation of essential household goods and services.

The problem in the trend to increasing the number of ALICE customers means that, going forward, the ALICE percentage will continue to rise. Utility customers paying for utility rate subsidies to other customers in a service territory such as PGW's (where a significant proportion of its rate base is low income or ALICE) through cross-charging to other customers is not a viable medium-term (to 2050) or long-term (to 2100) solution to increasing inability to pay. Arguably, imposing such obligations on Philadelphia's ALICE customers is unfair as they will be overly burdened in comparison with ratepayers/taxpayers in other service territories. It is not clear that PGW customers should or will be able to pay increasing cross-subsidies. *For now, we suggest examination of the ability to pay and the fairness of assessing payment to make up for the poorest customers' inability to pay when assessed across all PGW customers, including ALICE customers.* It is something to think about in developing solutions.

In PGW's service territory, it is not as if there are only wealthy households where everything works and a small percentage of poor households, who are unable to pay cost-of-service rates. In Pennsylvania, 39% of households are ALICE or less; in Philadelphia, 48% of households are ALICE or less. It is likely that payment of utility bill subsidies in the current manner utilized in Pennsylvania is not sustainable, particularly for PGW customers. It would be fairer not to engineer income shift in PUC proceedings from the poor to the more extreme poor. One way to do this is to shift funding of these subsidies from utility ratepayers to the state or federal income tax, or to a Commonwealth run program that is supported by LIHEAP/Crisis funds.

If it is a PUC goal to make utility payment assistance and weatherization and repair programs, including Low Income Usage Reduction Programs (LIURP), essentially the same across natural gas, electric and water utilities (and to develop frictionless transfer of customer information among these programs and state welfare and housing programs) it may be more productive to consider the advantages and disadvantages of administering these programs through state welfare and housing agencies (using common definitions of qualification and full transferability of information within government), rather than through the utilities.

TOPIC QUESTIONS: In answering the topic questions, we will try to think "big picture" with respect to enabling changes.

1. **What regulatory barriers are in place that would prevent utilities from having one utility do intake and then having that information provided to other utilities that provide service to that consumer for the purpose of universal service and CAP enrollment?**

   As far as we are aware, there are no focused regulatory barriers to sharing intake information among utilities, public or private. However, we recommend legal consultation in case there are legal provisions we are not aware of. If the programs were administered by a state agency, rather than by utilities, sharing of information would be internal to the agency, and frictionless.

   When utilities are independent program administrators for their own programs, there are risks in accepting qualifications by other agencies and organizations that are not subject to management control by the individual utility. For example, PGW performs CRP eligibility verification in-house utilizing employees covered under a collective bargaining agreement. However, poor performance or failure to identify fraud in carrying out initial qualification or subsequent recertification by another utility or one of their external vendors would typically be impossible to detect and correct.

   Moving away from direct management control creates substantial risk. With direct management control such as PGW uses, mistakes in classification and/or fraud are much less likely to go undetected and are easier to correct. Given the substantial financial benefits provided under

PGW's CAP program, it is important to ensure that the customers subsidizing the program (many of whom are low income, or ALICE) are protected from fraud/misrepresentation or other errors.

2. **What regulatory barriers or other obstacles exist if an outside provider does the intake on behalf of multiple utilities serving the consumer and what solutions exist to overcome any barriers?**

   As far as we are aware, there are no regulatory barriers to engaging an outside provider to carry out screening customers for intake for payment assistance or weatherization/repair/LIURP programs.

   (A) **State Administrator.** We can envision a state agency administrator rather than independent utility administration of either or both payment assistance and low-income residential usage reduction programs. If the state, for example, becomes the administrator of low-income utility payment assistance, and the customer calls the utility with a payment problem, the utility refers the customer to state social services for qualification and assistance.

   If funding for such a program is developed by assessing utilities to create a state pooled fund it will mean that utilities pay in according to a common formula (for example, derived according to per therm sales) and the state draws on the fund according to need. Using a common formula, state administration and a state pool, utilities in relatively high-income areas would be subsidizing the needs of low-income customers without regard to location, which would be more fair. This would lower assessment to paying customers in Philadelphia by spreading assessments to pay for the program to all utilities and paying customers in Pennsylvania. We are not aware of any problems with this type of program, and it offers opportunity to expand programs with less financial impacts on customers since it is socialized across a larger payment base.

   (B) **State Administration for 0-50% of Poverty.** We note that state administration of a program for customers at or below 50% of poverty would likely work better than administration for this income level through utilities. Incomes at the bottom of the income distribution generally are so small that households cannot function on several levels. The level of social disorganization experienced by these households requires comprehensive social services and this level of social support is outside the range of what utilities are equipped to do. However, programs for upper poverty levels are administered, a structured hand off of customers at or below 50% of the federal poverty level to state social services would benefit all parties. To clarify, this carve out of the households at the bottom of the poverty classification for administration by state social services would mean that their cost-of-service energy bills would be completely or nearly completely paid to the utilities by the state, and that necessary social services would be provided by the state.

3. **Should CAPs be administered statewide across all utility service territories rather than on a utility-by utility basis? If so, what are the barriers to accomplishing this and what are the benefits and drawbacks to this approach? If not, what are the benefits and drawbacks of continuing to administer the programs on a utility-by-utility basis?**

For accountability to work, each utility has a need to be free to establish its own relationships with other organizations, including CAPs, and to conduct these relationships in accordance with experience of performance. CAPs can vary in performance, and from time to time the performance of the CAP can change. For example, a CAP may excel for eleven years and then have a few less positive years, before recovering again. For purposes of accountability, relationships are best kept contingent on current performance experience.

In states in which utilities are the program administrators, such as Pennsylvania, some utilities prefer to work through agencies that are under direct contract to ensure management accountability, and some prefer to utilize internal labor. However, in other states, a state agency such as a state housing division or a state energy office administers weatherization programs through CAPS, and this form of organization works well. Generally, for companion federal programs such as LIHEAP, the state administrator is a state energy office, a state welfare division, or state housing division. It is quite workable, and it may be more efficient to run utility-funded weatherization through the same service delivery framework that delivers LIHEAP and the federal weatherization assistance (WAP) program since it can coordinate the programs and offer the customer a "one-stop" shop.

4. What additional consumer education and outreach could be undertaken to make more low-income consumers aware of the benefits that may be available to them?

This assumes that the customer should or must participate in the offered program(s). We need to remember that when a customer cannot pay bills, they necessarily talk with a utility staff member and that staff member will make them directly and immediately aware of program options if they are not already aware. So, given that this person-to-person contact *will happen in every case,* the problem of enrolling qualified customers in programs is not primarily a matter of customer awareness, but rather is one of customer decision-making, and also customer willingness to do their part to follow through to complete the actions required to gain the benefits of the program.

At the same time, some customers who qualify for and could benefit from a program choose not to participate, and for qualified customers in programs a meaningful percentage choose not to recertify or choose not to provide the income information or other information required to recertify.

From experience, customer enrollment in an opt-in program is often around 25% of technically qualifying customers. For Natural Gas Distribution Companies in Pennsylvania, in 2019 (prior to Covid)[3] the industry average participation rate was 33.8%. The participation rate for PGW was 36.8%. The participation rate is defined as the number of customers enrolled as of December 31 divided by the number of confirmed low-income customers. The Pennsylvania natural gas industry rate for 2019 is 21.3% if the number of estimated low-income customers is used as the divisor instead of the number of confirmed low-income customers; PGW's rate for 2019 is 27.3% using estimated number of low-income customers as the divisor.[4]

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[3] While numbers ae available for 2020 and 2021, Covid and waiver of rules, for example for recertification, make the counts and percentages for these years unrepresentative. The 2024 numbers should be good, unless there is another major social disruption on the order of the Covid disruption to programs and payment requirements.

[4] Percentages based on Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Bureau of Consumer Services, Universal Service Program & Collections Performance, 2021 Report. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Bureau of Consumer Services, December 2022. Note that estimated low-

If the PUC goal is 100% participation, then realistically, programs need to be designed as opt-out programs (and the total Pennsylvania costs of an opt-out program thoroughly analyzed prior to implementation– particularly with respect to a utility with a significant low/lower income customer base such as PGW).

To our knowledge, there has not been a systematic study for Pennsylvania of reasons why some customers who qualify for and could benefit from a program choose not to participate, and why some qualified customers in programs choose not to recertify or submit only a portion of the data required to recertify. A systematic "reason analysis" study could be useful as a basis for developing policy response.

5. **Can recertification periods in the existing CAP Policy Statement at Section 69.265(8)(viii) be extended so that otherwise eligible consumers do not lose benefits solely due to the fact that they timely failed to recertify their eligibility?**

They could be, but in order to prevent mistakes in qualification and to prevent fraud, they should not be. Management control is essential to maintain the integrity of the programs.

Utility payment assistance programs typically have a high dropout rate at the point of recertification. So, it is logical to recommend reducing the frequency of recertification points. However, recertification has been reduced over the past several years, and further reduction is not a good idea. We need to remember that recertification is essential to ensure continued qualification for participation in the program – this is essential when the program benefits are as significant as they are in PGW's CAP. Recertification spots and checks mistakes in enrollment and also prevents overt fraud. This is another balance point in program design. It is reasonable to move recertification from every year to every two-years (as PGW recently proposed and had approved), and three-year recertification might be appropriate for some utilities and some programs, depending on context and concrete experience.

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income customers may be somewhat over-inflated using this method. See: https://www.puc.pa.gov/media/2188/2021_universal_service_report_rev122722.pdf.

However, the bottom-line reality is that recertification is an essential control tool to ensure that funds provided by other customers are spent only for designated purposes, and to correct mistakes and prevent fraud. It is a matter of balance.

6. **Can the default provisions in the existing CAP Policy Statement at Section 69.265(9) be modified to reduce the chances that otherwise eligible consumers do not lose benefits solely due to the failure to comply with one of the articulated default provisions?**

The default provisions in the existing CAP Policy Statement at Section 69.265(9) can be used to dismiss CAP participants from participation in CAP. Failure of a participant to comply with any one of the default provisions should result in dismissal from CAP participation. Four of the five (5) provisions should be retained in the CAP Policy Statement.

(i) Failure to abide by established consumption limits.

Given cumulative experience within Philadelphia, PGW will no longer penalize customers for exceeding consumption limits, while PGW will continue to offer weatherization/repair/LIURP/CARES assistance. Other utilities may have the same or different experience, as the regions in Pennsylvania are diverse.

We have found that when the housing stock is old or not well maintained, weatherization/repair/LIURP will only benefit some residential customers. While it would be possible to continue this provision with exception for individual cases, if housing stock is predominantly old and curing energy use problems would require new construction of dwellings it is more functional and more fair not to continue this provision. Utilities in different service territories may have different experiences.

(i) **Failure to allow access or to provide customer meter readings in 4 consecutive months.** This provision is necessary to run a responsible utility and to be fair to all other customers, who are often paying most of the utility bill, month to month, for participating customers. Meter readings are essential to track energy use, both to ensure the ability to construct proper bills and to track energy use by each customer. This problem does not occur with most meters. Modern meters are now often automatic and can be controlled from a central office. Four months without a meter read is not good practice. If meter reading is blocked by a customer for four months, the situation is extreme, so this default provision is a sound and necessary tool to encourage provision of access. If there is a change to this provision, it should be tightened to three consecutive months. Meter reads are essential to utility operations. A provision of this type is necessary both as a flag and as a tool to clarify and encourage active customer responsibility. There should be no change to this provision.

(ii) **Failure to report changes in income or household size.** This provision exists because the targeting and qualification of a household for participation in a low-income utility payment assistance program depends on a mathematical calculation that uses household income and number of persons in the household as inputs. If these factors change, eligibility for continued participation in the program may change. This provision should be kept in order to screen out households that no longer qualify for subsidy. The information is also useful in determining special circumstances that explain determination of rise in energy usage in order to determine exceptions, such as addition of a child. Knowing the number of household members can provide explanation for an increase in energy use that is flagged by the meter and/or can be used to reclassify a household for a change in the household's required Percentage of Income Payment Plan monthly payment. There should be no change to this provision. However, there could be an exception for a household that fails to report a change in income or household size that would not change the required payment for the household.

(iii) Failure to accept budget counseling, weatherization/usage reduction or consumer education services. This provision exists to support better customer payment performance, better customer understanding of customer responsibility, and as a tool to encourage participation in programs.

For residential structures that require weatherization/usage reduction it would not be sensible to permit a participating customer to refuse services that would reduce energy waste, unless the refusal is beyond the customer’s control (for example, landlord refusal). The utility and the Commission should be oriented towards insuring customers have enough energy to use, but not waste energy. Having the tool to remove a customer from the program in which other customers are paying, month to month, for most of their energy use is sometimes essential to secure socially responsible behavior.

Budget counseling might be dropped from this list. PGW does not offer budget counseling. Generally, problems of inability to pay in a service territory are not due to inability to budget. Typically, a customer experiencing inability to pay cost-of-service energy bills simply does not have enough income to enable payment; budget counseling is not essential because the customer’s problem is that they simply do not have enough income and budget counseling will make no practical difference in their situation.

(iv) Failure to recertify eligibility.

Removal of a customer from a program for failure to recertify is an essential tool to promote accountability and appropriate customer responsibility. Adjustments in this area have been made already, for example moving the frequency of recertification from one to two years. Flexibility here keeps more customers in the programs but weakens the requirement for participating customer responsibility, facilitates mistakes in classification of eligibility (and so, runs up costs), and lax enforcement creates opportunities for fraud.

Recertification in low-income utility payment assistance programs is generally easy, and it is not clear why qualifying customers may sometimes choose not to recertify.

Cost control is essential to program operation, and the requirement for recertification is an essential tool for cost control and prevention of fraud. Both sides of the balance have to be provided for and should be considered equally. There should be no change to this provision.

Virtually all programs lose a substantial number of participants at recertification. The benefit of requiring periodic recertification is that it prevents misclassification and blocks fraud. The cost is that a large number of customers who actually qualify are screened out of the program, primarily due to nonresponse to requests to participate in the recertification procedure or to failure to complete the information required (often failure to complete the required income information).

7. Should utilities be required to develop and use standardized CAP forms and CAP procedures? What are the barriers, if any, of establishing a common application?

There could be an inter-utility working group to compare applications and see if a common application might be workable. At same time, it should be recognized that it might not work out. For example, PGW has spent significant funding to create online application software for customers to submit their CAP applications (including by phone with photos of documentation). Modification to this online application would likely be costly. Further, for the past approximately fifty years, the Commission has encouraged utilities to create programs suited for each utility, within general guidelines, and evaluated the programs created. This permits local variation to suit conditions in different parts of the state. Utilities can be operating in different economic and other local contexts that may indicate the need for different forms. However, content has been somewhat standardized over the years, and further standardization could be explored.

8. What other additions or changes to the existing CAP Policy Statement should be made to increase eligibility, enrollment, and maintenance of CAP benefits?

Practical, workable ideas to improve the CAP Policy Statement to support increased fairness, efficiency and effectiveness of Customer Assistance Programs should always be welcome. However, the Commission should equally consider the need for program controls to ensure accountability and customer responsibility. We need to consider the needs of customers who are required to pay the energy bills of customers who are unable to pay their own energy bills as well as the needs of the subsidized customers, who lack the ability to pay. Examination of these concerns requires careful consideration and balance.

9. What changes are required to the Commission's existing policies or regulations to incorporate improvements?

Any suggested changes should be examined in a proceeding, where it can be determined which suggested changes are, on balance, likely to be improvements and which are not. Also, the Commission should examine what form and direction additional regulation, or deregulation should take in this area, particularly given the increasing costs of these programs in Pennsylvania.

It is necessary to understand each suggested change not only from the perspective of the household receiving the subsidy, but also from the perspective of effects on other customers who are required to pay a substantial amount beyond their energy bills to cover the energy bills of customers who are unable to pay energy bills equal to their cost-of-service bills (and, instead, are billed according to a percentage of their household income).

We submit that while such changes currently remain possible, and should be examined from the perspective of balance, the time will come when continually increasing subsidies from paying customers to customers who are unable to pay full cost-of-service bills will not be possible both substantively and from the perspective of fairness, particularly for PGW customers given the significant proportion of its customers who are low and near low-income. In particular, the commission should consider a limit of the size of the assessments to prevent overburdening the customers of some utilities in comparison to others, particularly in a service territory with a significant proportion of ratepayers who are ALICE.

However, one source of cash is not being optimized, and that is LIHEAP funds. Last season PGW was required to refund $760,000 of unused federal LIHEAP funds back to the state. Other utilities may have similar experiences. The Commission should consider policy analysis to find a better way of integrating LIHEAP into the CAPs. There is actually a shortage of federal funding from a utility and utility ratepayer perspective, so program requirements should be revised to allow application of this existing funding, rather than the annual give back due to apparent over subsidization. This problem does not exist in other states.

Further, the Commission should consider if it is fairer, overall, to transfer subsidization of customers at the bottom range of poverty (0-50% of the federal poverty level) away from utility ratepayers, and over to state or federal funding with administration though state social services rather than through utilities. The problems that compound for households at this level of income really require broad social services intervention that utilities are unable to provide.

Also, a "hand-off" from the utility to social services would transfer the costs of this highest-cost customer group to the tax system, which enables taxation in accordance with incomes, and away from the utility rate system which cannot take income into account for payments of subsidies for customers unable to pay cost-of-service bills.

Attachment B

2023 Report by United Way: *ALICE in the Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Pennsylvania*

Attachment B

ALICE IN THE CROSSCURRENTS

COVID AND FINANCIAL HARDSHIP IN

PENNSYLVANIA

2023 Report | UnitedForALICE.org

UNITED FOR ALICE

United Way

United Way of Pennsylvania

ABOUT UNITED FOR ALICE AND OUR PARTNERS

ALICE in Crosscurrents: COVID and Financial Hardship in Pennsylvania is brought to you by United Way of Pennsylvania — representing 42 member United Ways — in partnership with United For ALICE, a driver of innovative research and action around financial hardship for **ALICE** (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed) households. With a commitment to racial and economic justice, United For ALICE and United Ways across Pennsylvania share this work with foundations, government, corporations, and other nonprofits to inform policy and promote positive change for ALICE households. The grassroots ALICE movement, developed by United Way of Northern New Jersey, has spread to 27 states and the District of Columbia. Learn more about the ALICE movement here.

To create the ALICE Reports, our team of researchers works with Research Advisory Committees composed of experts from our partner states. This work is guided by our rigorous methodology, which is updated biennially with experts from across our Research Advisory Committees.

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United Way of Pennsylvania partners with United for ALICE to bring the ALICE research to Pennsylvania.

United Way of Pennsylvania

To learn more about how you can get involved in advocating and creating change for ALICE in Pennsylvania, contact: Kristen Rotz, President, United Way of Pennsylvania at krotz@uwp.org.

To access interactive ALICE data and resources for Pennsylvania, go to UnitedForALICE.org/Pennsylvania.
To view first-person stories from Pennsylvania ALICE households, visit uwp.org/alice.

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ALICE RESEARCH IN A TIME OF CHANGE

This ALICE Report provides the first look at the extent of financial hardship in Pennsylvania using ALICE metrics since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The pandemic has disrupted longstanding patterns in how and where people live, work, study, save, and spend their time. And the story of ALICE and the pandemic is still unfolding as this Report is being written, amid an ongoing health crisis and an economic and public policy landscape that continues to shift. In a time of change, United For ALICE remains committed to providing the most up-to-date local data possible on financial hardship in Pennsylvania and across the U.S.

Two pillars of the ALICE measures are household costs and income. The **Household Survival Budget** calculates the cost of household essentials for each county in Pennsylvania and relies on a wide range of sources for the budget items of housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a smartphone plan, plus taxes.

For household income, the ALICE measures rely on the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS experienced such significant disruption in data collection in 2020 that the Census Bureau released only experimental estimates, which are not included in our analysis. By 2021, standard Census data collection had resumed.

Household costs are compared to household income to determine if households are **below the ALICE Threshold** (also referred to as "the Threshold" in this Report). This includes both households in **Poverty**, with income below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and those that are **ALICE**, with income above the FPL but below the cost of basics.

Our standard ALICE data is based on the ACS — both household tabulated data and individual data from the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) records. In addition, this Report includes our analysis of two surveys that capture the experiences of a nationally representative sample of households during the pandemic:

- Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (SHED), October, 2019; November, 2020; and November, 2021

- U.S. Census Bureau's COVID-19 Household Pulse Survey (Household Pulse Survey), August 19–August 31, 2020; September 14–November 14, 2022; and December 9–December 19, 2022

Learn more about our methodology at: UnitedForALICE.org/Methodology

KEY TERMS

- **ALICE: A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed — households that earn above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) but cannot afford the basic cost of living in their county. Despite struggling to make ends meet, ALICE households often do not qualify for public assistance.
- **ALICE Threshold of Financial Survival:** Derived from the Household Survival Budget, the minimum average income that a household needs to afford housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, and a smartphone plan, plus taxes. Calculated for all U.S. states and counties.
- **Below ALICE Threshold:** Includes people in poverty-level and ALICE households combined.

Data Notes: The data used in this Report are estimates; some are geographic averages, others are one- or five-year averages depending on population size. Percentages are rounded to whole numbers, sometimes resulting in percentages totaling 99% or 101%. ALICE analysis includes all households, regardless of work status, as employment is fluid and most households have members who are working, have worked, or are looking for work.

THE ALICE HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL BUDGET

The ALICE Household Survival Budget is the foundation of the ALICE research. This budget calculates the bare-minimum cost of the household basics needed to live and work in the modern economy by household composition, in every county.

When compared to the more accurate cost of living included in the Household Survival Budget, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is drastically inadequate. Unlike the ALICE budgets, the FPL is not based on the cost of contemporary household necessities, and except for Alaska and Hawai'i, it is not adjusted to reflect cost-of-living differences across the U.S. Nor does it adjust for different ages of household members. The FPL is increased annually based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) Consumer Price Index (CPI), and those increases are the same for all U.S. households of a given size. By contrast, the actual household costs in the Survival Budget have increased at slightly different rates depending on location, household size, and household composition.

Yet despite its inadequacies, the FPL continues to be the standard for determining the number and proportion of people living in poverty in the U.S. **With the FPL as the primary way for policymakers and local stakeholders to gauge the extent of financial hardship in their communities, a huge portion of struggling U.S. households go unrecognized.**

Across Pennsylvania, for all household sizes and in all locations, the FPL is well below the Household Survival Budget. In 2021, the FPL was $26,500 for a family of four. In contrast, Figure 1 shows that the average cost of living for a family of four in Pennsylvania was $65,796, considerably higher than the FPL, and the average household costs for a single adult were also substantially higher. Cost increases in the Household Survival Budget were driven by housing, food, and health care. Increases were mitigated by child tax credits in 2021 for families with children.

Figure 1. ALICE Household Survival Budget and Federal Poverty Level, Pennsylvania, 2021

	Federal Poverty Level Census income thresholds that vary by household size but not geography to determine who is in poverty	**ALICE Household Survival Budget** The cost of the essentials needed to live and work in the modern economy, by household type and location
Family of Four		
Monthly Total	$2,208	$5,483
Annual Total	$26,500	$65,796
Percent Change, 2019–2021	3%	12%
Single Adult		
Monthly Total	$1,073	$2,193
Annual Total	$12,880	$26,316
Percent Change, 2019–2021	3%	14%

Note: Percent change is pre-tax.

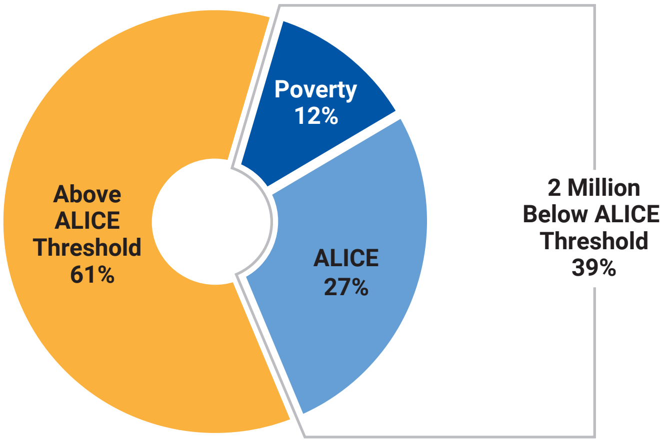
Sources: ALICE Household Survival Budget, 2021; Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), HHS poverty guidelines for 2021, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

	ALICE Household Survival Budget	Average Monthly Costs, Pennsylvania, 2021	
	Description, Update, and Sources	One Adult	Family of Four
Housing	**Rent:** Fair Market Rent (40th percentile) for an efficiency, one-bedroom, or two-bedroom apartment (based on family size), adjusted in metro areas using the American Community Survey (ACS) — minus utilities **Utilities:** As captured by the Community Expenditure Survey (CEX) **Update:** Costs of rent and utilities are now shown separately. ***Sources:*** *ACS metro housing costs and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (rent); CEX (utilities)*	$519 rent + $154 utilities	$628 rent + $292 utilities
Child Care	Cost for registered Family Child Care Homes for infants (0–2 years), preschool-age (3–4), and school-age children (5–12) ***Source:*** *Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, 2019*	$ -	$1,275
Food	USDA Thrifty Food Plan by age with county variation from Feeding America **Update:** A change in legislation requires the USDA Thrifty Food Plans to reflect the cost for resource-constrained households to purchase a healthy, practical diet, starting in 2021, increasing costs from prior years. ***Sources:*** *Feeding America; U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)*	$434	$1,182
Transportation	Operating costs for a car (average daily miles by age, cost per mile, license, fees, and insurance), or public transportation where viable **Update:** The decline in public transportation use during the pandemic reduced the average expenditure, yet the cost for workers who had to use it to commute remained the same. To reflect this, the budget uses 2019 average CEX spending. ***Sources:*** *AAA, Federal Highway Administration, The Zebra (car); CEX (public transportation)*	$323	$788
Health Care	Health insurance premiums based on employer-sponsored plans plus out-of-pocket costs for households with $40,000–$69,000 annual income by age, weighted with the poor-health multiplier. For the senior budget, cost of Medicare Part A and B, out-of-pocket costs, plus average out-of-pocket spending for the top five chronic diseases as reported by CMS. ***Sources:*** *Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS); CEX (health); Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)*	$223	$885
Technology	Smartphone plan with 10GB of data for each adult in a household **Update:** Costs were upgraded from a 5GB to a 10GB monthly data plan to reflect the increased need for internet access. ***Source:*** *Consumer Reports*	$75	$110
Miscellaneous	Cost overruns estimated at 10% of the budget, excluding taxes, to cover one-time unanticipated costs within the other categories	$173	$516
Taxes	Federal, state, and local taxes owed on the amount of income to cover the Survival Budget, as well as tax credits, including the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) **Update:** Due to the significant effect of the expanded tax credits in 2021, total taxes before credits and the credits are both listed. ***Sources:*** *Internal Revenue Service; Tax Foundation*	$292	$1,009 Tax before CTC and CDCTC -$1,202 CTC and CDCTC
	Monthly Total	$2,193	$5,483

To see the Household Survival Budget for other household compositions at the state and county levels, go to UnitedForALICE.org/Household-Budgets/Pennsylvania.

ALICE IN PENNSYLVANIA: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The number of households in financial hardship in Pennsylvania continues to be undercounted in official measures. According to the FPL, 12% of households in Pennsylvania (636,093) were in poverty in 2021. Yet United For ALICE data shows that another 27% (1.4 million households) — more than twice as many — were **ALICE** (**A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed). ALICE households earn above the FPL, but not enough to afford the basics in the communities where they live.



The reality is that of the 5.2 million households in Pennsylvania, over 2 million — 39% — had income below the ALICE Threshold of Financial Survival in 2021. These included both households in poverty and ALICE households.

The crux of the problem is a mismatch between earnings and the cost of basics. For example, 36% of cashiers (one of the most common occupations in Pennsylvania) were below the ALICE Threshold in 2021. These workers earned a median hourly wage of $11.03 — not even enough to cover the **ALICE Household Survival Budget** for one worker employed full time ($13.16 per hour), much less for a family with children, even with two adults working (combined wage of $32.90 per hour). Between 2019 and 2021, the cost of basics increased across Pennsylvania and remained well above the FPL. For a family of four in 2021, the FPL was $26,500 while the ALICE Household Survival Budget was $65,796. From 2019 to 2021, the average annual costs (excluding taxes) increased 14% for a single adult, 11% for a single senior, and 12% for a family of four.

ALICE Household Survival Budget, Pennsylvania Average, 2021

	Single Adult	Single Senior	2 Adults, 1 Infant, 1 Preschooler
Monthly Costs			
Housing – Rent	$519	$519	$628
Housing – Utilities	$154	$154	$292
Child Care	-	-	$1,275
Food	$434	$400	$1,182
Transportation	$323	$278	$788
Health Care	$223	$517	$885
Technology	$75	$75	$110
Miscellaneous	$173	$194	$516
Tax Before Credits	$292	$345	$1,009
Monthly Total	$2,193	$2,482	$6,685
ANNUAL TOTAL Before Credits	$26,316	$29,784	$80,220
Tax Credits (CTC and CDCTC)	-	-	($14,424)
ANNUAL TOTAL with Credits	**$26,316**	**$29,784**	**$65,796**
Full-Time Hourly Wage	***$13.16***	***$14.89***	***$32.90***

Note: CTC = Child Tax Credit, CDCTC = Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. Percent change is pre-tax. Full-time hourly wage represents the wage needed at 40 hours per week to support the annual total, with credits. For the family of four, this represents the combined wage needed for two workers. Many households incur higher costs, especially for housing, as units may not be available at Fair Market Rent. To view ALICE Household Survival Budgets for all counties and for any household composition, visit UnitedForALICE.org/Household-Budgets/Pennsylvania

Sources: AAA, 2021; Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2021; American Community Survey, 2021; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021—Consumer Expenditure Surveys; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021—Occupational Employment Statistics; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2021—Medicare - Chronic Conditions; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2021—Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey; Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2021; Federal Highway Administration, 2017; Feeding America, 2022; Fowler, 2021; Internal Revenue Service, 2021; Internal Revenue Service—FICA, 2021; Medicare.gov; Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, 2019; Scarboro, 2021; Tax Foundation, 2021; The Zebra, 2022; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021—Official USDA Food Plans; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2021—Fair Market Rents; Walczak, 2021.

This Report details the impact of competing economic forces and public policy interventions during the pandemic on ALICE households in Pennsylvania in 2021. It also presents research showing that the impact of the pandemic on financial security continued beyond 2021.

Key findings include:

- **Financial hardship over time:** ALICE households are especially vulnerable to national economic disruptions. The number of ALICE households in Pennsylvania increased substantially through the Great Recession (2007–2010) then continued to increase gradually afterward, never returning to pre-Recession levels. By 2019, that number had just started to fall — and then the pandemic hit. From 2019 to 2021, the total number of households in Pennsylvania increase by 2% and the number of households below the ALICE Threshold (ALICE + Poverty) increased by 7% (from 1,902,886 to 2,044,773). During this period, the share of households below the Threshold increased from 37% to 39%.

- **Demographics:** There are households below the ALICE Threshold across all demographic groups. However, disparities exist in the rates of financial hardship due to persistent racism, ageism, gender discrimination, and geographic barriers that limit many families' access to resources and opportunities for financial stability. By race/ethnicity, White households made up the largest number of households below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania in 2021 (1.5 million), constituting 36% of all White households. And while the number of struggling households was lower for other groups, the percentage of those households was higher. For example, 54% (163,156) of Hispanic and 59% (313,068) of Black households were below the Threshold in 2021. By age of householder, the youngest (under age 25) and oldest (age 65+) households faced the highest rates of hardship. And by household composition, single-parent families with children were more likely to be below the Threshold than married-parent households or single/cohabiting households without children.

- **Work and wages:** Of the 20 most common occupations in Pennsylvania in 2021, 60% paid less than $20 per hour. Most of these saw an increase in the median wage; for example, the median wage for personal care aides increased by 14% to $13.65 per hour in 2021. But given that wages had stagnated for the previous decade, many top jobs still had a substantial percentage of workers who lived below the ALICE Threshold in 2021

- **Pandemic assistance:** Public assistance programs were temporarily expanded in 2021, but not enough to bring most households below the ALICE Threshold to financial stability. In Pennsylvania, a family of four with two parents working full time in two of the most common occupations (retail salesperson and cashier) could not afford the Household Survival Budget in 2021, even with the expanded Child Tax Credit, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and the Economic Impact Payments.

- **Savings and assets:** While emergency savings rates were increasing on average in Pennsylvania, rates differed by income. According to SHED, 38% of households below the ALICE Threshold had emergency savings or "rainy day" funds in October 2019 compared to 66% of households above the Threshold. By November 2021, the rate for both groups increased, yet the gap remained (44% vs. 73%). Similarly, in 2021, only 39% of households below the Threshold had retirement savings in 2021, compared to 67% of those above.

- **Beyond 2021:** With pandemic assistance waning while significant challenges remain, there are warning signs that the economic situation for households below the ALICE Threshold has worsened since 2021, including sustained high levels of food insufficiency, continued difficulty paying bills, medical debt, and feelings of anxiety and depression.

THE COMPETING FORCES OF THE COVID ECONOMY

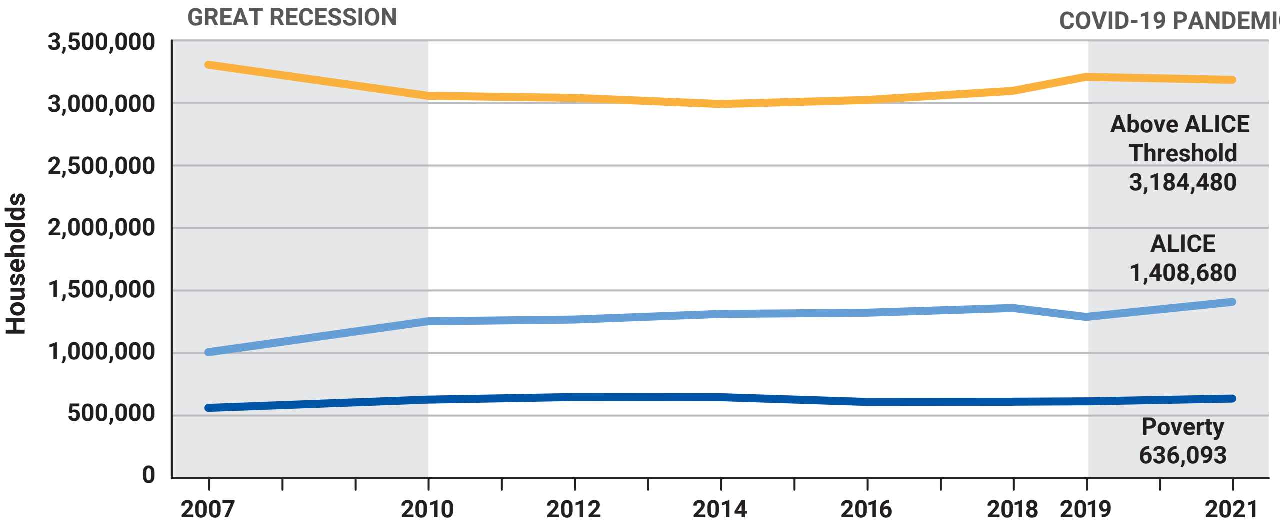
Competing forces have made it difficult to predict the net impact of the pandemic on household financial stability. When the pandemic hit, businesses, child care providers, schools, and community services closed, some permanently. The loss of jobs and wages was not experienced equally; those who could work remotely fared better than those who were required to be on-site. Initially, costs for many basics declined, but disruptions to the supply chain and higher wages to retain workers then pushed prices up — by 7.5% annually across the U.S. in 2021, compared to less than 3% annually in the prior 10 years — straining ALICE households even more.

Yet other forces provided economic benefits for many households. In 2021, average weekly wages across all industries were up 4.3% in Pennsylvania from 2020, and up 5.6% nationally (the second-fastest national increase in the past two decades). In addition, emergency pandemic measures and economic policies provided critical support, including housing assistance, expanded unemployment insurance, stimulus checks, enhanced tax credits, and a nationwide eviction moratorium.

Rates of financial hardship in Pennsylvania have changed over time (Figure 2). During the last major economic disruption — the Great Recession — the percentage of Pennsylvania households below the ALICE Threshold increased from 32% in 2007 to 38% in 2010. In the decade that followed, the number of ALICE households gradually increased — never returning to pre-Recession levels — while the number of households in poverty declined slightly.

Between 2018 and 2019, the number of ALICE households had just started to decline. However, by 2021, that number increased again, to a level higher than before the pandemic. From 2019 to 2021, the total number of households in Pennsylvania increased by 2% and the number of households below the ALICE Threshold increased by 7% (from 1,902,886 to 2,044,773). Yet compared to the increase in financial hardship following the Great Recession, the impact of the pandemic was more muted, with the percentage of households below the ALICE Threshold rising from 37% in 2019 to 39% in 2021.

Figure 2. Households by Income, Pennsylvania, 2007–2021



Percent Below ALICE Threshold	2007	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	2019	2021
	32%	38%	39%	40%	39%	39%	37%	39%

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2007–2021; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007–2021

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID ECONOMY ON… ALICE DEMOGRAPHICS AND EQUITY

While the overall number of Pennsylvania households that were struggling financially increased from 2019 to 2021, the impact of competing forces played out differently across demographic groups (Figure 3). In many cases, the pandemic exposed and exacerbated disparities and vulnerabilities that have long existed in our society, with substantial differences in rates of hardship by race/ethnicity, age, and household composition.

In Pennsylvania in 2021, Black and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander households, young households, and single-parent households had the highest rates below the ALICE Threshold. White households, working-age households, and married-parent households had the lowest rates below the Threshold.

Rates of financial hardship differed significantly between groups, a result of persistent racism, ageism, gender discrimination, and geographic barriers that limit many families' access to resources and opportunities for financial stability:

- In 2021, the largest number of households below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania were White (1,455,461), making up 36% of all White households. And while the number of struggling households was lower for other groups, the percentage of those households was higher. Fifty-four percent (163,156) of Hispanic households, 55% (3,916) of American Indian/Alaska Native, 59% (313,068) of Black households, and 64% (822) of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander households were below the Threshold.
- By age of householder, the youngest and the oldest households had the highest rates of hardship, with 69% of households headed by someone under age 25 and 51% of households headed by someone age 65 or older living below the Threshold in Pennsylvania. By comparison, 33% of households headed by people age 25–44 and 32% of households headed by those age 45–64 were below the Threshold.
- By household composition, single parents were most likely to be below the ALICE Threshold, with 54% of single-male-headed households and 74% of single-female-headed households struggling to make ends meet. Rates of financial hardship were lower for married-parent households (14%) and single/cohabiting households without children (35%).
- Households in predominantly rural counties had a higher rate of financial hardship (43%) than those in predominantly urban counties (39%).

Figure 3 paints a clear picture of the rates of hardship for different demographic groups compared to the Pennsylvania average. For all households in the state, 12% were in poverty and 27% were ALICE in 2021.

Figure 3. Household Financial Status and Key Demographics, Pennsylvania, 2021

	Total	Below ALICE Threshold	Poverty	ALICE	Above ALICE Theshold
ALL HOUSEHOLDS	**5,229,253**	**2,044,773**	12%	27%	61%
AGE					
Under 25 Years	157,036	108,616	35%	34%	31%
25 to 44 Years	1,596,189	522,742	13%	20%	67%
45 to 64 Years	1,931,246	619,395	11%	21%	68%
Seniors (65+)	1,544,782	794,020	11%	40%	49%
RACE/ETHNICITY					
American Indian/ Alaska Native	7,097	3,916	20%	35%	45%
Asian	155,597	54,043	11%	23%	65%
Black	531,651	313,068	21%	38%	41%
Hispanic	301,359	163,156	16%	38%	46%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1,282	822	16%	48%	36%
Two or More Races	155,888	70,954	12%	34%	54%
White	4,074,515	1,455,461	8%	28%	64%
HOUSEHOLD TYPE					
Married With Children	854,728	121,644	5%	9%	86%
Single-Female-Headed With Children	302,074	223,733	43%	31%	26%
Single-Male-Headed With Children	112,920	60,511	20%	33%	46%
Single or Cohabiting, Under 65, no Children	2,414,749	844,865	11%	24%	65%
URBAN/RURAL					
Rural	601,820	256,537	13%	30%	57%
Urban	4,627,433	1,788,236	12%	27%	61%

Note: The groups shown in this figure overlap across categories. Within the race/ethnicity category, all racial categories except Two or More Races are for one race alone. Race and ethnicity are overlapping categories; in this Report, the American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Native Hawaiian (includes other Pacific Islanders), and Two or More Races groups may include Hispanic households. The White group includes only White, non-Hispanic households. The Hispanic group may include households of any race. Because household poverty data is not available for the American Community Survey's race/ethnicity categories, annual income below $15,000 is used as a proxy. Counties are defined as rural or urban based on the USDA's designation of metropolitan or non-metropolitan at the census tract level. Counties with 50% or more of the population in metropolitan tracts are designated as urban; those with 50% or more of the population in non-metropolitan tracts are designated as rural.

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2019 and 2021; American Community Survey, 2019 and 2021

Changes in Population and Financial Hardship (2019–2021)

In the decade preceding the pandemic, population growth in the U.S. had started to slow due to a decrease in the number of births and international migration, and an increase in deaths associated with the aging population. The pandemic exacerbated the national slowdown, and in 2021 population growth in the U.S. reached a historic low due to a sharp increase in COVID-related deaths, postponement of having children, and more restrictive policies on immigration.

The pandemic also affected domestic migration, which contributed to population shifts nationally and in Pennsylvania. Between 2020 and 2021, the percentage of the population that moved from one residence to another within the U.S. dropped from 9.3% to 8.4%. People moved for a variety of reasons, which included relocating to places where the cost of living was lower (especially for housing and taxes), and/or to less densely populated locations.

In Pennsylvania, the pandemic also impacted where people lived, who they lived with, and the demographics of households.

Location: In Pennsylvania from 2019 to 2021, all but one of the five largest counties (in terms of total households) saw an increase in total households: Bucks County by 3%, Montgomery and Delaware counties by 4%, and Philadelphia County by 7%. These counties also had an increase in households below the ALICE Threshold, with Bucks County seeing the largest percentage increase (up 19%). In contrast, Allegheny County — the second-largest county in the state — had a 1% decrease in both total households and the number of households below the Threshold. (See additional county-level data on the ALICE website and in the "County Comparison" section of this Report.)

Overall, the number of households in predominantly rural counties decreased across Pennsylvania, while the number of households in predominantly urban counties increased. The rate of financial hardship was higher in rural counties (43%) than in urban counties (39%) in 2021.

Age: Financial hardship increased for all household types, with the youngest households (headed by people under age 25) experiencing the largest increase. These young households had the highest rate of financial hardship before the pandemic, and from 2019 to 2021, the share of these households below the Threshold grew from 65% to 69%. In addition, the rate of financial hardship for households headed by someone age 65 or older increased from 48% to 51%. Rates for the other age groups increased only slightly: from 32% to 33% for households headed by those age 25–44 and from 31% to 32% for households headed by people age 45–64.

Household composition: All household compositions had an increase in the share of households below the ALICE Threshold, yet from very different starting points. Among households with children, the percentage of married-parent households below the Threshold increased from 13% to 14%, while the rate for single-male headed households increased from 50% to 54% and for single-female-headed households from 73% to 74%. The rate of financial hardship for single and cohabiting households without children also grew slightly, from 34% to 35%.

URBAN AND RURAL CHANGE IN PENNSYLVANIA (2019–2021)

- 2% decrease in total number of households in rural counties
- 3% increase in total number of households in urban counties

Race/ethnicity: This Report is not able to accurately capture change over time by race/ethnicity in the total number or share of households below the ALICE Threshold. Starting in 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau changed how it asks about and codes data on race and Hispanic origin. These changes help the Census and ACS provide a more complete picture of the U.S. population, especially for people who self-identify as multiracial or multiethnic. But as a result, the Census urges caution when comparing race data between years before and after 2020. For example, in Pennsylvania, the huge increase in the Census count of people of Two or More Races (also referred to now as Multiracial) — an increase of 125% from 2019 to 2021 — is a combination of actual growth in this population and improvements to Census questions and coding. (Note: The number of Multiracial households below the ALICE Threshold increased at a similarly high rate, by 104%).

Immigration: The pandemic not only imposed new barriers to international migration but also had a significant impact on immigrant communities across the U.S. According to the Migration Policy Institute, as a result of immigration center processing delays and bans on international travel, the number of visas issued in the U.S. dropped by half between 2019 and 2020. In Pennsylvania in 2021, 7% of the population were immigrants, the same as in 2019, with the largest number of immigrants originating from the Dominican Republic, China, and India. The counties with the largest number of immigrants included Philadelphia and Montgomery.

ALICE DATA ONLINE

Visit UnitedForALICE.org/Pennsylvania to see interactive maps and data on:

- Financial hardship over time at the state and county levels
- State and county ALICE demographics
- ALICE household budgets
- The labor landscape in Pennsylvania

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID ECONOMY ON... WORK AND WAGES

Overall, in 2021, the labor market was rebounding from the record-breaking unemployment and drop in total employment that occurred at the start of the pandemic. The unemployment rate was 6.5% in Pennsylvania in 2021, still higher than before the pandemic, yet a stark contrast to unemployment in April 2020 (16.5%). In addition, average weekly wages across all industries in Pennsylvania increased 4.3% from 2020 to 2021. This was driven by increased demand for essential workers, as well as by "The Great Resignation" — while some workers left the labor force, over time many more changed jobs to find better pay as well as work-life balance.

It was also a unique year for low-wage jobs and workers. In 2021, low-wage workers across the country experienced faster wage growth than middle- and high-wage workers, although from a much lower starting point. Research from Opportunity Insights shows that the number of low-wage jobs fell in Pennsylvania: In December 2021, there were 19.7% fewer jobs paying less than $29,000 per year than at the start of the pandemic — some became higher-paying jobs, others went away altogether.

State Unemployment Insurance (UI) helps individuals who lost jobs — before, during, and after the pandemic. In 2021, $2.4 billion was paid to individuals under Pennsylvania's regular unemployment insurance program, and an additional $284 million was paid in Extended Unemployment Benefits, available during periods of specified high unemployment.

During the pandemic, these standard UI benefits were expanded by the Cares Act, the American Rescue Plan, and the Continued Assistance Act, which included four temporary programs. The most utilized was the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program, which provided a $300 weekly supplement to all UI benefits (down from the $600 weekly supplement included in the original 2020 authorization). Additional programs extended the weeks of eligibility for people who exhausted regular UI benefits, and expanded eligibility to people who were not otherwise eligible for UI benefits (including workers who were self-employed, independent contractors, or gig economy workers). Temporary UI measures enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic ended nationally and in Pennsylvania in September 2021.

For low-wage workers, the increases in wages and UI benefits were important developments during the pandemic. But they are only part of the story; ALICE workers still faced significant challenges:

- Better pay and work opportunities were helpful, but not enough to recoup years of being squeezed by the increasing cost of basics, especially for those who struggled to secure full-time employment. As documented in the ALICE Essentials Index, the cost

THE ALICE ECONOMIC VIABILITY DASHBOARD – COMING FALL 2023

The Economic Viability Dashboard (EVD) will provide key data on the local economic conditions that matter most to ALICE households: Housing Affordability, Job Opportunities, and Community Resources. The EVD mapping, profile, and comparison features will help stakeholders identify the gaps that ALICE workers and families face in reaching financial stability. Then, the Action Toolkit puts that data to use by quantifying gaps and pairing them with promising solutions.

of essential goods had already been outpacing wages for more than a decade, stretching ALICE workers' household income even further.

- Many frontline and essential jobs became hazardous and difficult during the pandemic. In addition to increased exposure to COVID-19, many workers were required to work more days and hours, skip lunch and breaks, stand for hours, and work while sick. Others were gig workers, forced to work more hours to fill income gaps. Without protective gear, health insurance, or even sick days, there were increases in mortality compared with previous years, especially for food- and agriculture-sector workers.

- Underemployment became an increasing problem. Many workers were unable to work full time due to family responsibilities, being in school or training, illness, disability, or child care problems. Others were working part time because their hours had been reduced; still others were unable to find full-time jobs. In 2021 in Pennsylvania the underemployment rate that captures these workers was 9.6%, higher than the traditional unemployment rate (6.5%), and higher than before the pandemic (8.1% in 2019).

- Many older workers were also forced to retire earlier than planned. Nationally, according to SHED in November 2021, 25% of adults who retired within the year prior to the survey, and 15% of those who reported that they retired one to two years earlier, said factors related to COVID-19 contributed to when they retired.

- Nationally, those most impacted by unemployment, job disruption, and hazardous and difficult working conditions were immigrants and workers who were American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or of Two or More Races.

Wages for the Most Common Occupations

In 2021, the impact of the pandemic on workers' wages and wage gains did not translate uniformly across all jobs and sectors in terms of the share of households that were still left below the ALICE Threshold.

Of the 20 most common occupations in Pennsylvania in 2021, 60% paid less than $20 per hour. Most of these saw an increase in the median wage; for example, the median wage for personal care aides increased by 14% to $13.65 per hour in 2021. But given that wages had stagnated for the previous decade, many top jobs still had a substantial percentage of workers who lived below the ALICE Threshold in 2021 (Figure 4). The wage to cover the ALICE Household Survival Budget for one full-time worker was $13.16 per hour, or for a family with two adults and two children, a combined wage of $32.90 per hour.

While there were ALICE workers in all sectors, the occupations with the highest percentage of workers below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania in 2021 were personal care aide; cook; waiter/waitress; fast food and counter worker; nursing assistant; and cashier.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

The pandemic brought to the forefront the crisis in child care availability and cost. For families with two children in care, child care is often the most expensive item in their budget, even more expensive than housing. Child care workers are the workforce behind the workforce, yet many struggle to make ends meet for their own families: With a median hourly wage of $11.26 in Pennsylvania in 2021, 36% were below the ALICE Threshold. And with staffing and demand fluctuations, many child care providers went out of business during the pandemic. Lack of care remains an obstacle for working parents.

Figure 4. Top Occupations, Employment, Wages, and Percentage Below ALICE Threshold, Pennsylvania, 2021

Occupation	Total Employment (BLS)	Median Hourly Wage (BLS)	Percent Median Wage Change From 2019 (BLS)	Percent Workers Below ALICE Threshold (ACS PUMS)
Personal Care Aides	193,460	$13.65	14%	44%
Registered Nurses	149,270	$36.99	9%	5%
Driver/Sales Workers and Truck Drivers	148,500	$20.15	8%	22%
Retail Salespersons	130,420	$13.17	14%	22%
Cashiers	128,910	$11.03	9%	36%
General and Operations Managers	125,600	$47.08	-12%	10%
Office Clerks, General	124,270	$18.00	6%	16%
Laborers and Movers, Hand	122,680	$17.12	18%	32%
Fast Food and Counter Workers	121,170	$10.82	11%	39%
Customer Service Representatives	107,590	$17.83	5%	26%
Stockers and Order Fillers	102,020	$14.39	15%	33%
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	85,310	$18.01	3%	16%
Cooks	79,960	$13.36	9%	42%
Elementary and Middle School Teachers	71,840	$33.74	5%	6%
Nursing Assistants	68,180	$17.20	15%	37%
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	66,260	$21.63	13%	17%
Waiters and Waitresses	61,970	$11.39	7%	40%
Administrative Support Supervisors	60,710	$29.04	4%	9%
Maintenance and Repair Workers	59,040	$21.17	11%	21%
Secondary School Teachers	57,890	$36.27	16%	10%

Note: The 2019 median wage for Software Developers is not included in the Bureau of Labor Statistics—Occupational Employment Statistics dataset.

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2021; Bureau of Labor Statistics—Occupational Employment Statistics, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, PUMS, 2019 and 2021

To see more data on jobs by hourly wages and full-time, part-time, and hourly work schedules, visit UnitedForALICE.org/Labor-Force/Pennsylvania

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID ECONOMY ON… PANDEMIC ASSISTANCE

A prominent feature of the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was a range of direct assistance programs, including:

- Economic Impact Payments (stimulus payments)
- The expanded Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC)
- Pandemic-specific unemployment insurance
- Emergency rental assistance

While ALICE households generally earn too much to qualify for traditional forms of public assistance like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), almost all ALICE households qualified for the Economic Impact Payments, and ALICE families with children were eligible for the expanded CTC and CDCTC.

Figure 5 shows an example of the impact of pandemic assistance on a household's ability to meet the cost of basics in 2021. The figure shows a family of four in Pennsylvania with two parents working full time in two of the most common occupations, retail salesperson and cashier (median wages of $13.17 and $11.03 per hour, respectively). This family could not afford the Household Survival Budget in 2021, even with the temporarily increased credits and payments available to them: the CTC ($3,600 for each child under age 6), the CDCTC ($4,000 per child in child care), and the Economic Impact Payments ($2,800 for married couples plus $1,400 for each child). With both parents working full time, they were not eligible for Treasury Emergency Rental Assistance. This family's annual income fell short of the Household Survival Budget by $9,085, or 13%.

If both parents worked part time (20 hours per week), they could receive rental assistance to cover their rent, as well as SNAP and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), but they would still fall short in meeting the Survival Budget by $13,073, or 19%.

Additional actions taken by the state of Pennsylvania in response to the pandemic can be found in the National Conference of State Legislatures' State Action on Coronavirus Database.

Pandemic Timeline

2020 State Annual COVID-19 Deaths: 15,926

March 2020 — National Emergency Declared

Emergency Pandemic Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits (including PUA, PEUC, FPUC, and MEUC)

States required to keep Medicaid beneficiaries enrolled

April 2020 — Economic Impact Payments of up to $1,200 per adult for eligible individuals and $500 per qualifying child

December 2020 — First COVID-19 vaccinations receive emergency use authorization from FDA

Economic Impact Payments of up to $600 per adult for eligible individuals and up to $600 per qualifying child

2021 State Annual COVID-19 Deaths: 20,639

January to November 2021 — Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) provided on average $4,345 to low-income households to pay rent or utility bills

March 2021 — Economic Impact Payments of up to $1,400 for eligible individuals

July to December 2021 — Child Tax Credit payments (up to $300 month per child); temporary expansion of CTC ended in December

September 2021 — National end of all Emergency Pandemic UI benefits

October 2021 — End of CDC's eviction moratorium

CDC approves vaccinations for children age 5-11

2022 State Annual COVID-19 Deaths: 12,327

June 2022 – CDC approves vaccinations for children under 5 years old

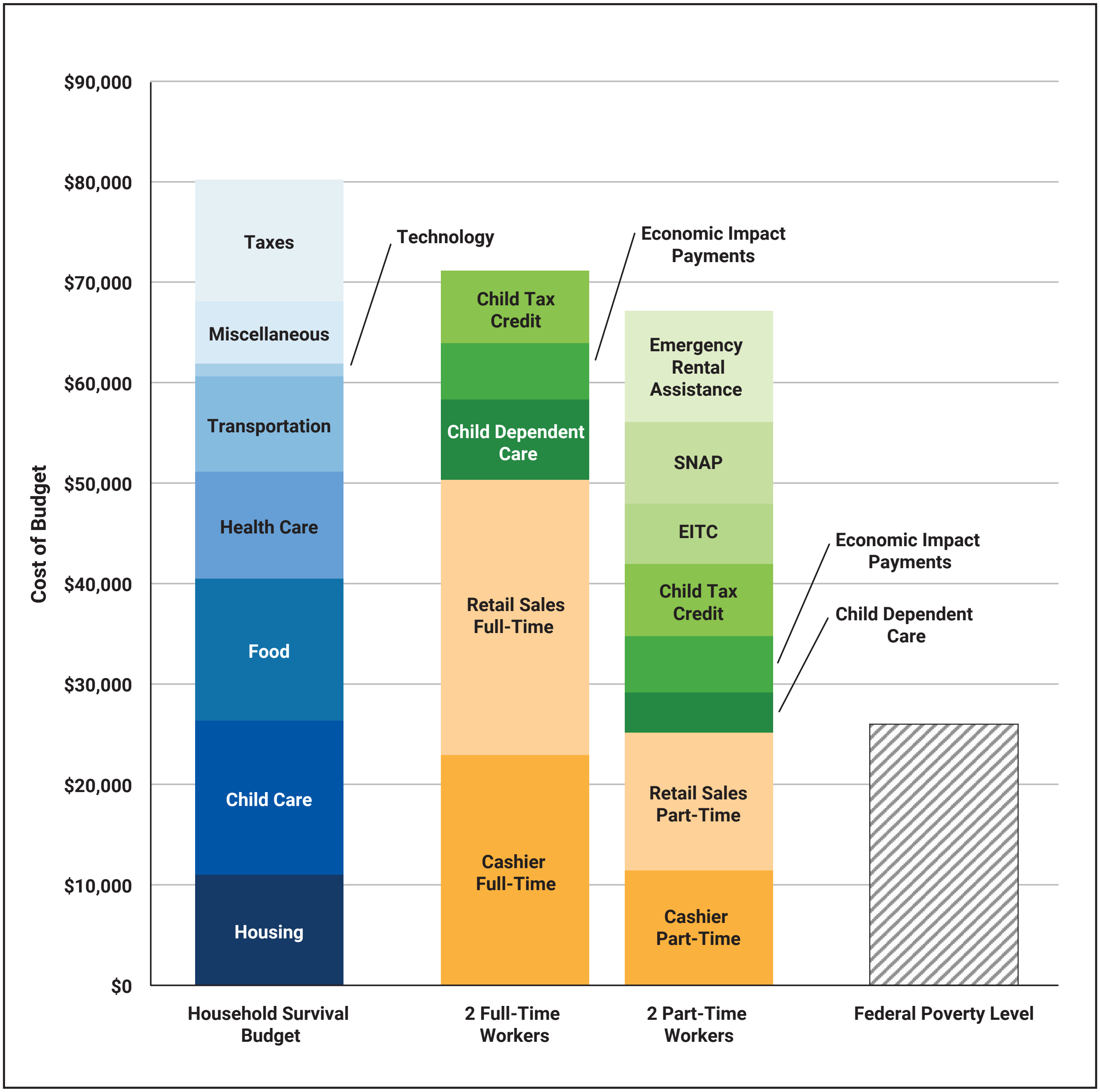
September 2022 – ERAP 1 expired

December 2022 – ERAP 2, taking applications Philadelphia, Erie, and Delaware Counties expending more than 80% of federal funds

2023

May 11, 2023 *— Scheduled end of the national emergency and public health emergency*

Figure 5. Income and Expenses, Family of Four, Pennsylvania, 2021



Note: Full-time income is calculated based on 40 hours per week; part-time income is based on 20 hours per week.

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2021; Bureau of Labor Statistics—Occupational Employment Statistics, 2021; Internal Revenue Service, tax credits – CTC, CDCTC, EITC, 2021; USDA, SNAP, 2021; U.S. Treasury, 2022

Participation in Assistance Programs

Traditional public assistance does not reach all people in households that are struggling financially. Due to income and assets limits, most ALICE households are not able to participate in public assistance; and additional barriers, strict program requirements, and stigma prevent even households in poverty from participating. In addition, income and asset limits for public assistance can create "benefits cliffs" that limit economic mobility.
In Pennsylvania in 2021:

- With increased food insecurity during the pandemic, the federal SNAP provided an emergency allotments option starting in 2020, increasing the amount of SNAP by about $90 per month per household. Because the income eligibility threshold for SNAP was 160% of the FPL in Pennsylvania, the reach of emergency and regular SNAP benefits was limited: 49% of households in poverty and 23% of ALICE households participated in 2021 based on ACS PUMS data. However, it is important to note that while not all financially insecure households are eligible for SNAP, the program reached nearly all eligible households in Pennsylvania.

- The percentage of households below the ALICE Threshold receiving direct cash assistance from programs like TANF was even smaller (10% of households in poverty and 5% of ALICE households).

- Participation in SSI — an assistance program only available for people with disabilities and older adults with limited financial resources — was also minimal, with 10% of all households below the ALICE Threshold and 17% of households with a member with a disability below the Threshold participating.

- To address the increased demands for health care during the pandemic, the federal government provided additional funding to states for Medicare and prohibited states from adding eligibility restrictions or terminating Medicaid coverage during the public health emergency. In 2021, 46% of all households below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania participated in CHIP or Medicaid.

- Paying for housing expenses was the top concern of households below the ALICE Threshold, as reported in the 2021 ALICE Report, *The Pandemic Divide*. The federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program was critical in stabilizing millions of households by paying for rent, utilities, and home energy costs. However, despite this infusion of funding to support struggling families, 15% of adult renters in Pennsylvania were not caught up on rent in the fall of 2022, according to the Household Pulse Survey.

In contrast, eligibility limits for the well-publicized stimulus payments (Economic Impact Payments, CTC, and CDCTC) were well above those for traditional public assistance programs, making them available to most poverty-level and ALICE households.

However, even qualified households experienced difficulties getting their payments, especially those who were filing taxes for the first time, those without bank accounts or internet access, and families with mixed immigrant status or who were experiencing homelessness.

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID ECONOMY ON… SAVINGS AND ASSETS

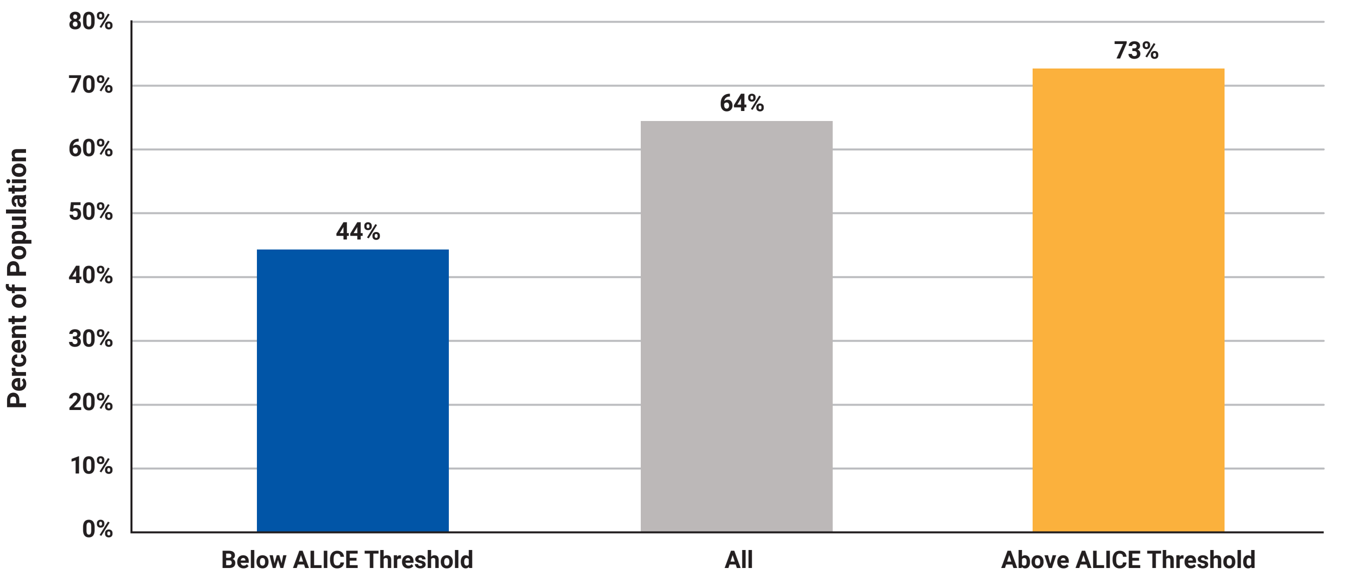
It has been widely reported that U.S. household savings increased during the pandemic. Yet analysis of the data from the Federal Reserve SHED reveals that the national average conceals different experiences by state and even more so by income level in terms of rainy day funds and retirement assets.

Rainy Day Funds

One of the best-known questions in the SHED survey asks whether respondents had set aside emergency savings or "rainy day" funds that would cover their expenses for three months in case of sickness, job loss, economic downturn, or other emergencies. In October 2019, 56% of Pennsylvania respondents reported having these funds; by November 2020, that share had increased to 61%, and by November 2021 it was 64% (Figure 6).

Yet only 38% of respondents below the Threshold in Pennsylvania reported having rainy day funds in October 2019, with the percentage increasing to 40% by November 2020, and to 44% by November 2021. In contrast, 66% of those above the Threshold in Pennsylvania had rainy day funds in October 2019, and that share increased to 71% in November 2020 and 73% in November 2021.

Figure 6. Funds to Cover Three Months' Expenses by the ALICE Threshold, Pennsylvania, 2021



Question: Have you set aside emergency or rainy day funds that would cover your expenses for three months in the case of sickness, job loss, economic downturn, or other emergencies?

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2021; Federal Reserve Board, Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (SHED), November 2021

Nationally, there were also substantial gaps by income and race/ethnicity in rainy day funds (this data is not available at the state level, but it is likely these disparities were mirrored in Pennsylvania). In 2021, White and Hispanic respondents below the ALICE Threshold had higher rates of emergency savings (42% and 41%, respectively) than Black respondents below the Threshold (32%). Rates were higher overall for respondents above the Threshold, yet gaps remained (77% for White, 71% for Hispanic, and 64% for Black respondents). Each of these racial/ethnic groups made gains during the pandemic, with Hispanic respondents both above and below the Threshold showing the largest increase in emergency savings. From October 2019 to November 2021, the percentage of Hispanic respondents below the Threshold with rainy day funds increased from 28% to 41%, and the percentage of Hispanic respondents above the Threshold with these funds increased from 57% to 71%.

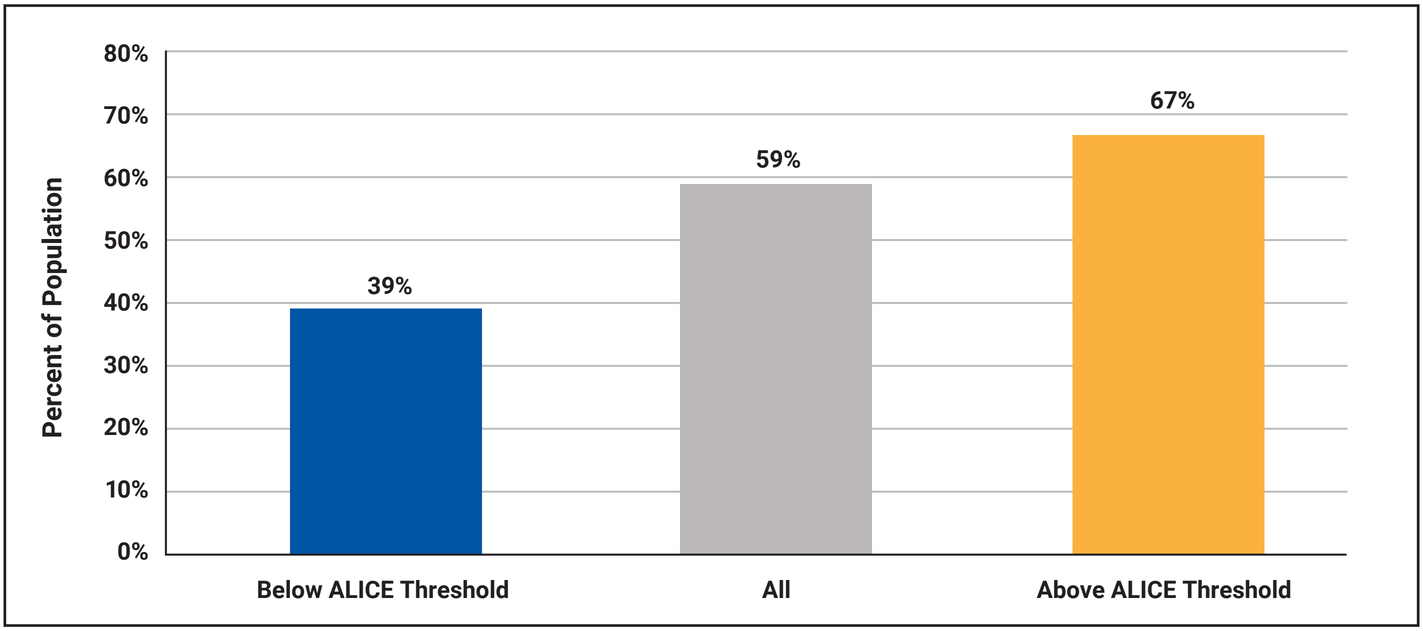
Retirement Assets

Having retirement assets was less common than having emergency savings in Pennsylvania. Retirement assets include 401(k)s, IRAs, pensions, or business or real estate holdings that provide income in retirement. Overall, 58% of Pennsylvania respondents reported having these funds in October 2019; that rate increased to 60% by November 2020 before decreasing slightly to 59% by November 2021. Yet these averages conceal a widening disparity in retirement assets between households above and below the ALICE Threshold (Figure 7).

Prior to the pandemic, in October 2019, 48% of respondents below the Threshold in Pennsylvania had retirement savings, according to SHED. That rate dropped to 39% by November 2021. In October 2019, 64% of respondents above the Threshold in Pennsylvania had retirement assets; the rate increased to 67% by November 2021.

The CARES Act reduced penalties for early withdrawals from retirement accounts, thus making it easier for households to access retirement funds. Overall, 8% of non-retired adults in Pennsylvania tapped their retirement savings in 2021, according to SHED. And according to a national retirement survey, the majority of loans or hardship withdrawals in 2022 were taken by low-income households.

Figure 7. Retirement Assets by the ALICE Threshold, Pennsylvania, 2021



Question: Do you currently have each of the following types of retirement savings? Selected at least one: 401(k); IRA; pension; savings outside a retirement account, business, or real estate holding that will provide income in retirement; other retirement savings

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2021; Federal Reserve Board, Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking (SHED), November 2021

BEYOND 2021: ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AHEAD FOR ALICE

The pandemic timeline shows a contracting economy in 2020 followed by a strong policy response in 2021. The government's broad pandemic response was effective in preventing the kind of surge in financial hardship that was experienced during the Great Recession.

But 39% of households were still living below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania in 2021. With COVID-19 continuing but pandemic relief benefits expiring, initial data from 2022 suggests that the economic situation has in fact gotten worse for ALICE, which in turn puts the wider economy at risk.

An analysis of recent surveys reveals that households below the ALICE Threshold are still facing food insufficiency, difficulty paying bills, medical debt, and feelings of anxiety and depression. These challenges were first reported in *The Pandemic Divide*, and are updated here with the most recent data from the SHED (through November 2021) and the Household Pulse Survey (through December 2022).

These surveys also provide an alarming look at the breakdown of pandemic experiences by race/ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity, and disability status. The differences here are even starker than when looking at income alone, giving credence to concerns that the pandemic is exacerbating racial and other inequities across all facets of life.

Warning signs:

Food insufficiency: ALICE families experiencing food insufficiency are a canary in the coal mine, indicating larger problems beyond food. Rates of food insufficiency have remained elevated since the beginning of the pandemic. In the August 2020 Household Pulse Survey, respondents below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania were far more likely to report that their household sometimes or often did not have enough food in the prior seven days than respondents above the Threshold (16% vs. 3%); by November 2022, those rates remained similar (16% vs. 6%). Some demographic groups

Figure 8. Food Insufficiency, Above and Below the ALICE Threshold, Pennsylvania, 2022

Food Insufficiency			
	Below ALICE Threshold	Above ALICE Threshold	State Average
Black	16%	12%	10%
Hispanic	31%	20%	
Female	12%	6%	
With a Disability	21%	17%	
LGBT	12%	9%	

Question: In the last seven days, which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household? Selected: Sometimes or often not enough

Note: Black respondents are non-Hispanic; the Hispanic group includes respondents of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin of any race; the "With a Disability" group includes respondents who have one or more vision, hearing, cognitive, mobility, or self-care difficulties; the "LGBT" group includes respondents who identify as gay or lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender.

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, September 14, 2022–November 14, 2022, Phase 3.6 experienced higher than average food insufficiency (Figure 8). For example, 21% of respondents with disabilities below the Threshold and 31% of Hispanic respondents below the Threshold reported not having enough food, compared to 10% of all Pennsylvania households.

For households with children below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania, rates of food insufficiency also remain elevated. In August 2020, 22% of respondents below the ALICE Threshold reported that often or sometimes their children were not eating enough because they couldn't afford enough food (compared to 2% for those above the Threshold); in November 2022, the rate increased slightly, to 23%, as did the rate for those above the Threshold (though still relatively low, at 4%).

With changes to the emergency pandemic food measures, including the ending of SNAP emergency allotments, many families will need to rely on the charitable food system that was designed for emergencies, but is increasingly an ongoing necessity.

- **Learning loss:** Following a year of widespread school closings and disrupted education, most students returned to in-person learning in the fall of 2021. The learning loss that accompanied remote learning has been widely reported. Not surprisingly, students in lower-income districts with fewer resources were hardest hit. Nationally, in 2021, 71% of parents below the Threshold said that their child was prepared for the academic year ahead, compared to 81% of parents above the Threshold. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that nationally in 2022, scores for 9-year-old students declined five points in reading and seven points in mathematics compared to 2020 — the largest average score decline in reading since 1990, and the first-ever score decline in mathematics. Drops were even larger for low-income students as well as for Black and Hispanic students.

- **Behind on rent payments:** According to the Household Pulse Survey, renter households below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania were more likely than those above the Threshold to report that they were not caught up on rent payments. In August 2020, 20% of renters below the Threshold and 5% of renters above the Threshold were not caught up; by November 2022, those rates changed to 21% for renters below the Threshold and 7% above the Threshold. Renters who fall behind on rent are at greater risk for eviction, especially since the federal moratorium on evictions and foreclosures and state-level bans have now expired, and funding for rental assistance is running out.

- **Struggling to pay bills:** During the height of the pandemic, in August 2020, 48% of households below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania said it was somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual items such as food, rent or mortgage, car payments, and medical expenses, according to the Household Pulse Survey. That rate increased to 52% by November 2022. These rates were much higher than for respondents above the Threshold (17% in August 2020 and 27% in November 2022).

- **Facing lack of savings and medical debt:** By the end of 2021, many ALICE families were struggling to save and were facing medical debt, making them more vulnerable to an emergency in the future. Only, 44% of respondents to the SHED survey below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania had set aside emergency savings or rainy day funds that would cover their expenses for three months in the event of sickness, job loss, economic downturn, or another emergency. In addition, 20% of respondents below the Threshold had incurred an unexpected major medical expense that they had to pay for out of pocket because it was not completely paid for by insurance.

Physical health: A September 2020 national survey found that 36% of adults (age 18 to 64) delayed or missed health care services, including dental care, primary care, or specialist visits; preventive health screenings; and medical tests. For those with one or more chronic conditions, a mental health condition, or a lower income, the likelihood of postponing or forgoing care was even higher. Parents also postponed care for their children. In the fall of 2021, Pennsylvania households below the ALICE Threshold were almost twice as likely to report that they missed, delayed, or skipped their child's preventive check-up in the last 12 months than households above the Threshold (36% vs. 19%). These delays, especially when coupled with preexisting conditions, can contribute to more serious conditions in the future.

According to the November 2022 Household Pulse Survey, Pennsylvania respondents below the ALICE Threshold were also more likely to report having symptoms of long COVID (such as fatigue, "brain fog," difficulty breathing, heart palpitations, dizziness, or changes to taste/smell) lasting three months or longer that they did not have prior to having COVID-19 than respondents above the Threshold (37% vs. 24%).

Mental health: With these sustained challenges, it's not surprising that people below the ALICE Threshold in Pennsylvania were more likely to report feeling depressed or anxious than those above the Threshold. According to the Household Pulse Survey, in August 2020, 16% of respondents both below and above the Threshold reported feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge nearly every day over the last two weeks, but the rate for those below the Threshold increased to 22% as of November 2022. Respondents below the Threshold were also more likely to report feeling down, depressed, or hopeless at both timepoints (12% in 2020 and 16% in 2022) than respondents above the Threshold (8% in 2020 and 8% in 2022). Some demographic groups experienced substantially higher rates of feeling anxious than the state average (Figure 9).

The lack of mental health resources during the pandemic has been widely recognized, and awareness is increasing, especially with the launch of the Nationwide Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (988). But there remains a severe shortage of mental health resources, especially for low-income families, and mental health providers struggle to meet increased demand.

Figure 9. Feeling Anxious, Above and Below the ALICE Threshold, Pennsylvania, 2022

Feeling Nervous, Anxious, or on Edge			
	Below ALICE Threshold	Above ALICE Threshold	State Average
Black	14%	15%	18%
Hispanic	29%	23%	
Female	17%	15%	
With a Disability	35%	35%	
LGBT	39%	20%	

Question: Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge? Selected: Nearly every day

Note: Black respondents are non-Hispanic; the Hispanic group includes respondents of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin of any race; the "With a Disability" group includes respondents who have one or more vision, hearing, cognitive, mobility, or self-care difficulties; the "LGBT" group includes respondents who identify as gay or lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender.

Sources: ALICE Threshold, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey, September 14, 2022–November 14, 2022, Phase 3.6

From Warnings to Reality: ALICE Today

The strength of the Pennsylvania economy is inextricably tied to the financial stability of all residents. As the pandemic has shown, ALICE workers are critical to the smooth running of the economy, during times of crisis and beyond. And, in turn, the stability of ALICE families depends on their being able to fully participate in that economy. Leaving ALICE behind in the recovery sets households and the larger economy up for greater vulnerability to the next economic disruption.

This is already happening, at the same time that the frequency and severity of natural disasters continue to increase. In places that experienced natural disasters in 2021 and 2022 — such as Hurricane Ian in Florida; wildfires in California, Idaho, and Utah; flooding in Kentucky and Missouri; and tornadoes in the southern U.S. — ALICE families faced higher risks. For example, following Hurricane Ian in September 2022 in Florida, according to the Household Pulse Survey (December 2022), respondents below the ALICE Threshold were more likely than households above the Threshold to be displaced from their home (9% vs. 6%). One month after the storm, respondents below the Threshold were at least three times more likely to be experiencing a shortage of food (39% vs. 13%) and drinkable water (42% vs. 12%).

The pandemic has highlighted the ability of government policymakers and business managers to respond to changing conditions quickly. The 2021 ALICE data may surprise some readers who were expecting much worse. But 2021 was a unique year — and these warning signs are both a call to action and a challenge to complacency. We ignore our essential workers at our economy's and our communities' peril.

COUNTY COMPARISON: INCOME STATUS, 2021

Pennsylvania Counties, 2021			Percent Change, 2019–2021	
County	Households	% ALICE + Poverty	# of Households	# ALICE + Poverty
Adams	39,986	37%	3%	9%
Allegheny	545,892	38%	-1%	-1%
Armstrong	27,796	41%	-4%	23%
Beaver	71,450	39%	1%	4%
Bedford	19,334	45%	-3%	0%
Berks	164,312	41%	6%	24%
Blair	49,795	42%	-5%	1%
Bradford	24,287	44%	-3%	11%
Bucks	248,122	34%	3%	19%
Butler	81,220	33%	4%	4%
Cambria	55,283	46%	-2%	15%
Cameron	2,131	53%	-2%	17%
Carbon	26,312	48%	1%	13%
Centre	57,518	45%	-2%	12%
Chester	204,047	30%	6%	26%
Clarion	14,632	46%	-9%	-4%
Clearfield	31,570	43%	-1%	-1%
Clinton	14,620	45%	0%	5%
Columbia	25,717	44%	-2%	7%
Crawford	32,896	41%	-7%	-2%
Cumberland	104,768	33%	3%	12%
Dauphin	120,423	37%	6%	-3%
Delaware	218,280	36%	4%	17%
Elk	13,499	37%	-4%	6%
Erie	110,561	43%	0%	4%
Fayette	55,986	49%	2%	13%

Pennsylvania Counties, 2021			Percent Change, 2019–2021	
County	Households	% ALICE + Poverty	# of Households	# ALICE + Poverty
Forest	1,786	53%	-3%	22%
Franklin	62,081	35%	3%	2%
Fulton	5,990	41%	0%	4%
Greene	13,957	41%	-2%	0%
Huntingdon	15,588	42%	-7%	-12%
Indiana	32,956	47%	7%	15%
Jefferson	17,745	46%	-4%	5%
Juniata	8,756	42%	-7%	0%
Lackawanna	88,294	39%	0%	7%
Lancaster	210,063	35%	3%	6%
Lawrence	36,286	40%	-3%	0%
Lebanon	54,906	35%	2%	-1%
Lehigh	141,505	42%	3%	-1%
Luzerne	134,132	41%	2%	2%
Lycoming	47,022	40%	5%	1%
McKean	15,776	46%	-8%	8%
Mercer	46,701	39%	1%	8%
Mifflin	18,641	42%	-2%	3%
Monroe	65,907	36%	17%	-2%
Montgomery	335,248	29%	4%	5%
Montour	7,476	39%	1%	5%
Northampton	122,615	37%	7%	2%
Northumberland	37,823	45%	-2%	12%
Perry	17,823	38%	-2%	2%
Philadelphia	660,921	48%	7%	8%
Pike	23,351	38%	6%	16%
Potter	6,385	47%	-1%	-3%
Schuylkill	58,212	40%	0%	11%

Pennsylvania Counties, 2021			Percent Change, 2019–2021	
County	Households	% ALICE + Poverty	# of Households	# ALICE + Poverty
Snyder	14,373	43%	-3%	6%
Somerset	29,115	44%	-1%	0%
Sullivan	2,398	44%	-12%	-6%
Susquehanna	15,430	40%	-10%	-10%
Tioga	16,340	44%	0%	3%
Union	13,880	44%	-4%	-4%
Venango	21,033	40%	-5%	-4%
Warren	16,070	40%	-6%	1%
Washington	88,544	35%	2%	2%
Wayne	19,379	47%	3%	19%
Westmoreland	154,810	41%	0%	16%
Wyoming	10,600	37%	-2%	1%
York	178,898	38%	2%	31%

Attachment B

NATIONAL COMPARISON: INCOME STATUS, 2021

STATE	RANK	TOTAL	Household Income Status		
	(1 = lowest % Below ALICE Threshold)	Number of Households	% Households in Poverty	% ALICE Households	% Households Below ALICE Threshold
United States	–	126,903,920	13%	29%	41%
Alabama	48	1,951,995	16%	32%	48%
Alaska	1	266,391	10%	22%	32%
Arizona	24	2,813,110	12%	28%	40%
Arkansas	46	1,176,614	16%	31%	47%
California	35	13,420,382	12%	31%	43%
Colorado	13	2,297,529	10%	27%	37%
Connecticut	19	1,428,313	10%	28%	39%
Delaware	27	395,656	12%	29%	41%
District of Columbia	31	319,565	15%	28%	42%
Florida	44	8,533,422	13%	32%	45%
Georgia	47	3,954,813	14%	34%	47%
Hawai'i	29	490,101	12%	30%	41%
Idaho	34	681,926	11%	32%	43%
Illinois	10	4,981,919	12%	24%	36%
Indiana	21	2,656,794	12%	27%	39%
Iowa	9	1,293,028	11%	24%	36%
Kansas	20	1,153,270	12%	27%	39%
Kentucky	38	1,767,504	16%	28%	44%
Louisiana	50	1,776,260	19%	32%	51%
Maine	30	583,562	12%	30%	42%
Maryland	15	2,352,331	10%	28%	38%
Massachusetts	25	2,756,295	11%	28%	40%
Michigan	22	4,029,761	13%	26%	39%
Minnesota	8	2,254,997	10%	26%	35%
Mississippi	51	1,116,509	20%	32%	52%
Missouri	36	2,459,987	13%	30%	43%
Montana	28	443,529	12%	29%	41%
Nebraska	17	781,693	11%	27%	39%
Nevada	42	1,189,085	14%	31%	45%
New Hampshire	2	548,727	8%	25%	33%
New Jersey	12	3,495,628	11%	26%	37%
New Mexico	45	821,310	17%	29%	47%
New York	40	7,635,201	14%	30%	44%
North Carolina	41	4,150,059	13%	31%	44%
North Dakota	6	322,588	11%	23%	34%
Ohio	16	4,820,453	13%	25%	38%
Oklahoma	43	1,536,903	15%	30%	45%
Oregon	39	1,697,608	12%	32%	44%
Pennsylvania	**23**	**5,229,253**	**12%**	**27%**	**39%**
Rhode Island	18	435,782	12%	27%	39%
South Carolina	33	2,037,203	15%	29%	43%
South Dakota	11	352,363	11%	26%	36%
Tennessee	37	2,740,302	14%	30%	44%
Texas	32	10,705,476	14%	29%	43%
Utah	5	1,087,978	9%	25%	34%
Vermont	26	265,098	11%	29%	40%
Virginia	14	3,300,111	10%	28%	38%
Washington	4	3,013,644	10%	24%	34%
West Virginia	49	711,392	17%	31%	48%
Wisconsin	7	2,436,961	11%	23%	34%
Wyoming	3	233,539	11%	22%	34%

NEXT STEPS

Capturing the true extent of financial hardship in Pennsylvania is critical for the appropriate allocation of funds for programs in areas such as education, health care, food access, housing, and employment. There is a lot more to be done to change the trajectory for households struggling to make ends meet. How can you help?

Learn more and help to raise awareness of the struggles ALICE households face with:

- The interactive ALICE in Pennsylvania webpages, to dig deeper into:
  - » County Reports
  - » Household budgets
  - » Maps with data for local geographies
  - » Demographics
  - » Labor force data
  - » ALICE data alongside additional Indicators of Well-Being

Connect with stakeholders:

- Contact your local United Way for support and volunteer opportunities.
- Connect with members of the state Research Advisory Committees that support this work.
- Find your state and federal representatives and see ALICE household data by legislative district with our ALICE Legislative District Tool.

Turn the ALICE data into action in your state, county, or community:

- Use the ALICE metrics to highlight the challenges ALICE households face, to inspire action and generate innovative solutions that promote financial stability.
- Armed with the ALICE data, advocate for policy change, apply for grant funding, allocate funding for programs and services targeted to ALICE households, etc.
- Learn more on our ALICE in Action webpage about the programs, practices, and policies to improve access to affordable housing, high quality child care and education, healthy food, health care, transportation, workforce training, and more.
- Demonstrate potential financial challenges that ALICE workers face with interactive tools from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta that incorporate the Household Survival Budget. These tools, which include the Policy Rules Database and the Career Ladder Identifier and Financial Forecaster, map changes in benefits along a career path and identify potential benefits cliffs.

Be an ally and advocate for better data:

- Advocate for more accurate data collection by the U.S. Census Bureau for people who have been historically undercounted, including (but not limited to) people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, people of color, individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, and people in low-income and hard-to-count geographic areas.
- Support the implementation of a single combined question for race and ethnicity. Census research shows this change will yield a more accurate portrait of how the U.S. population self-identifies, especially for people who self-identify as multiracial or multiethnic.

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