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Michigan United Ways association to update ALICE report next spring

By [Lindsay VanHulle](#)

LANSING — The **Michigan Association of United Ways** next spring plans to release an updated version of a 2-year-old report that identified barriers to employment limiting Michigan's low-income workers.

Jackson-based **Consumers Energy Foundation** awarded the state United Way association a \$25,000 grant that will help researchers update the report that studies a group of the working poor nicknamed ALICE, for "asset-limited, income-constrained but employed." A United Way organization in New Jersey coined the term in 2009 to represent workers who have incomes above the federal poverty line but not enough to be financially stable.

Michigan's ALICE report was issued in September 2014. In it, United Way researchers identified barriers to work — from affordable child care to reliable transportation to adequate housing — that can prevent ALICE workers from climbing the income ladder.

In December 2015, *Crain's* and **Bridge Magazine** [explored the cost of turnover among this population of workers](#) — some estimates suggest it can cost at least \$3,400 each time an employee leaves or is fired — and some employers' efforts to address these barriers by offering resources and wraparound services at work.

United Way leaders said they plan to study changes from 2014 to 2016, most notably the impact of the federal Affordable Care Act and an increase in Michigan's minimum wage, and look at ways trends might have changed.

"ALICE has demonstrated success as a unifier not only in our United Way system, but across community partners as well," Scott Dzurka, president of the Michigan Association of United Ways, said in a statement. "While we've identified the core issues in our first report, we need to determine if the information has been used to institute change to ensure working families are able to pay for basic necessities."

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