**A special thanks for the honor of serving as the founder of the Women’s Leadership Council (WLC) during my professional tenure as President and CEO of the United Way of Pioneer Valley, Inc.**

Happy Anniversary to the past and present members of the United Way of Pioneer Valley Board of Directors, staff, donors, volunteers, and supporters for Living United for 100 years in the Pioneer Valley. I am extremely proud to have served as the first African American woman to serve in the role of President and CEO of the United Way of Pioneer Valley in its 100 years of existence. I am also a proud founder of the Women’s Leadership Council in 2014. The Women’s Leadership Council is a National United Way Program and offers an opportunity for women to fulfill their philanthropic endeavors by sharing their talents, treasures, time, and leadership at a United Way affiliate.

On a personal note, I wish to thank Kathryn Dube, past Chair of the Board of Directors, and a co-founder of the WLC. I would be remiss if I did not thank the United Way staff for the special role, they played in sheparding this new initiative in the Pioneer Valley.

I am deeply indebted to the founding members of WLC for their time and commitment to identifying and engaging a diverse group of women from communities, for profit and non-profit organizations, civic and public agencies, and businesses throughout the Valley. Further, the membership included cultural and ethnic diversity, age diversity, and geographic diversity. This diverse group of women helped UWPV expand the donor base, raise substantial funding through the annual campaign, hosting fundraisers and securing donations and sponsorships. Donations to WLC resulted in new and unique programs for women and girls, which would not have been possible without the WLC. In addition, WLC members were leaders in various opportunities to participate in targeted volunteer activities and offered professional social networking events and opportunities to engage in public policy advocacy.

In closing, I am extremely honored to have worked with the founding members of WLC who embraced a vision of building a network of women that unknowingly embodied the guiding principles and practices of Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging simply because it was the right thing to do and not a business imperative. Yes, the founders understood the power and magic of “collective action and diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging through Living United!

Yours Truly,

Dora D. Robinson