

Skills for Good Jobs

Agenda

ILLINOIS
2021

We want every Illinoisan to contribute to an equitable recovery in Illinois through access to good jobs with family-sustaining wages. To do this, Illinois must invest in job creation strategies that include education and skills training. This will build the foundation for a widely-shared recovery, a skilled workforce ready to meet a changing economy, and increased racial, gender and economic equity.



The COVID Recession has left the Illinois economy at a turning point. Our state has a choice about how to rebuild our economy to address both long-term economic inequalities, and new economic crises. Illinois must invest in creating family-sustaining jobs and funding inclusive skills training, subsidized employment, supportive services, and career-focused education. These investments are critical for a widely-shared recovery, a skilled workforce ready to meet a changing economy, and increased economic equity.

Due to structural racism, BIPOC and women Illinoisans have long faced disproportionately high unemployment and poverty rates due to unequal access to education and skills training, workplace discrimination, historical disinvestment, and barriers to employment (like insufficient transportation, child care, and housing.) BIPOC and women workers in Illinois also face a “good jobs” gap, which is getting worse due to the pandemic.

Between March and September 2020, low-wage jobs were lost at eight times the rate of high-wage jobs and have returned more slowly. Women of every race, but especially women of color, are overrepresented in low-wage jobs.

Illinois businesses are also struggling to stay afloat. On top of the challenges of the pandemic, many businesses report struggling to find and retain workers whose skills match their needs. 50% of jobs in Illinois require skills training beyond high school but not a four-year degree - yet only around 40% of Illinoisans meet that qualification.

Illinois lacks sufficient funding to re-skill our workforce and address systemic barriers. 95% of workforce funding in Illinois comes from dwindling federal investment, which has decreased over 30% over the past two decades. State funding for workforce and higher education all but disappeared during the budget crises and has yet to be restored to the scale needed. The federal COVID response has not included nearly enough money for workforce development, despite unprecedented unemployment.

If Illinois does not act swiftly to invest in good jobs and increase equitable access to opportunity, this recession will set marginalized communities back generations, businesses will struggle to fill open positions, and talented Illinoisans will continue to struggle to pay their bills.

456,204

Illinoisans were receiving benefits because they were out of a job through March 13, 2021.

As of 2017,

20% of Black workers,

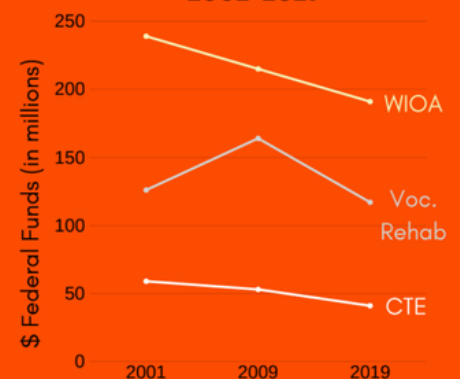
20% of Native American workers,

28% of Latinx workers, &

8% of White workers

were both working full time and also economically insecure.

Federal Workforce Grants to IL, 2001-2019



SPAC estimates that job training for returning citizens yields a

\$20.26

return on every dollar spent.

4 Workforce Policy Pillars for Illinois

Here's what we can do in the 2021 ILGA:

1



Dedicate State Funding for workforce training with a racial and gender equity lens.

- Allocate discretionary federal COVID recovery dollars to workforce development to train and re-skill the Illinois workforce.
- Require that every state investment in job creation - whether in infrastructure, clean energy, or public health - invest in workforce, skills training, and small business development that is equitable and accessible.
- Devote revenue from the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Program to support job training and workforce development in a variety of sectors.
- Establish a state-funded, cross-agency Employment Barrier Support & Job Retention Fund to help job seekers overcome acute barriers to employment and meet their career advancement goals.
- Invest \$50 million in MAP grants to move towards providing need-based aid to all eligible students.
- Direct funding to programs that support employer and provider training partnerships, like the Job Training and Economic Development Program (JTED).
- Expand and make permanent funding for programs that offer paid training and work opportunities to low-income youth, like YouthBuild Illinois ([HB1832](#)).

2



Promote policies that eliminate structural employment barriers disproportionately faced by people of color, foreign-born workers, and women in Illinois.

- Support ABL Act (Accurate Backgrounds from Law Enforcement) ([SB 995 SA1](#)), which removes barriers for people with criminal records or convictions.
- Support Paid Sick Days ([HB3898](#)) and Paid Family Leave to ensure low-wage workers don't have to lose their jobs or pay due to illness and family emergencies.
- Invest significant state and federal funds into the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) to expand access to affordable early care and education programs and increase compensation for the early childhood workforce.
- Create a Low Income Broadband Assistance Program ([HB3275/SB1557](#)) to ensure the availability and affordability of broadband service to families to access remote learning and work platforms.
- Eliminate driver's license suspensions for failure to pay child support, and for failure to appear in court.

4 Workforce Policy Pillars for Illinois

Here's what we can do in the 2021 ILGA:

3



Ensure that no Illinoisan lives in poverty through promoting good jobs and a strong safety net.

- Expand the state Earned Income Credit ([HB2891 / SB2184](#)) to increase tax breaks for lower-income working Illinoisans.
- End the practice of seizing state tax returns intercept for EITC recipients under the Local Debt Recovery Program. ([SB 2139](#)).
- Make it easier for people in need to get waivers of overpayments that were not their fault, under the "regular" unemployment insurance (UI) program, for the period of emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic ([HB 3851](#)).
- Eliminate the felony drug conviction ban on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program ([HB88](#)).
- Expand MAP grants to cover certificate programs at community colleges that lead to employment in a high-demand industry ([SB1643 / HB703](#)).
- Authorize Illinois Community Colleges to offer a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in early childhood education to expand the early childhood workforce and offer an affordable, accessible pathway to a degree ([SB 1832 / HB3619](#)).

4



Increase research, data sharing, and transparency across state agencies that touch education and workforce training to identify and address equity gaps in our public investments.

- Support the expansion and integration of the state's longitudinal data system to include all education, workforce, public benefits, and labor market agency data.
- Back the Student Parent Data Collection Act ([SB 267 / HB 2878](#)) to collect data about the parental status of enrolled students at public institutions of higher education and the number of children served by public institutions of higher education's child care centers.
- Expand on the Workforce Feasibility Consolidation study from [HB2170](#) with a robust, inclusive study of the Illinois workforce system that puts equity at the center and includes community voices of workers and service providers.

PROGRESS

Investment in people and jobs is key to a strong recovery for the Illinois economy. To position businesses for success, we need to invest in building a skilled and inclusive workforce. Without reskilling and investment in education and training, businesses will struggle to fill positions and talented Illinoisans will struggle to pay their bills.

The Skills for Good Jobs Agenda is supported by a broad network of career pathways advocates and service providers, including:



Connect to
learn more:

Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger,
Chicago Jobs Council
rachelbr@cj.net

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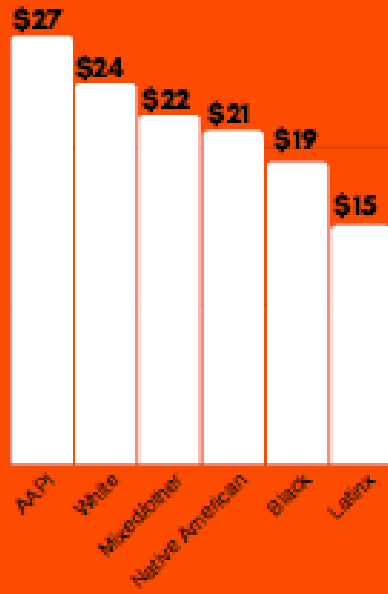
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Illinois Median Wage Gap by Race

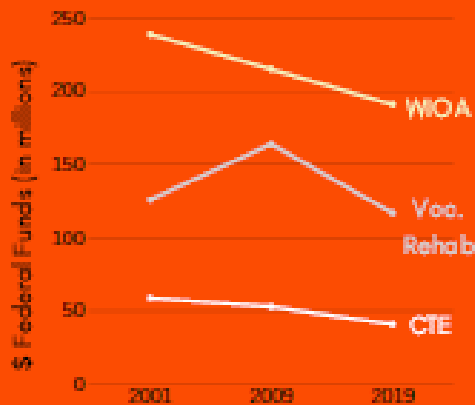


More than

90%

of IL's workforce funding comes from federal sources

Federal Workforce Grants to IL, 2001-2019



30% decrease in federal funding over the past two decades

Skills Agenda Advocacy Week April 27-30

Join other workforce advocates in promoting the 2021 Skills for Good Jobs Agenda, and telling leaders in Springfield about our top policy priorities, including:

- Dedicate State Funding for workforce training with a racial /gender equity lens.
- Promote policies that eliminate structural employment barriers disproportionately faced by people of color, foreign-born workers, and women in Illinois.
- Ensure that no Illinoisan lives in poverty through promoting good jobs and a strong safety net.
- Increase research, data sharing, and transparency across state agencies that touch education and workforce training to identify and address equity gaps in our public investments.



1

Attend Virtual Visit with your IL state representative(s)

Meetings are being planned with the IL House of Representative and Senate offices. The visits will normally be 30-60 minutes, and occur over Zoom.



2

Send a letter to your IL state representative(s)

Contact information and letter templates will be shared with all you sign up. You can focus on telling your story and sharing about investments our states needs in workforce development.



3

Join an advocacy week training "Skills Advocacy 101" on April 23 at 10 am

The training will cover key talking points, sample letters, sample meeting schedule, and coaching to prepare what you would like to share with the legislator.

A training will be offered over Zoom.
The session will be recorded for later viewing.



4

Sign up to join advocacy week at <https://tinyurl.com/IL2021SkillsAgenda>





