

IL Skills for Good Jobs Agenda

2022

Legislative
Platform

A strong, inclusive economy in Illinois requires promoting policies that support all workers' career aspirations, creating jobs with family-sustaining wages, and boosting local businesses. 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 and a skilled workforce ready to meet a changing economy, and increased economic equity.

Due to structural racism and sexism, Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) and women Illinoisans have long faced disproportionately high unemployment and poverty wages 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. COVID recovery has seen the job market polarized into high-wage and low-wage employment. Women of every race, but especially women of color, are overrepresented in low-wage jobs. Employment rates have rebounded past pre-COVID levels for high-wage workers, increasing 4.3% in Illinois, but remain significantly lower for low-wage workers, 40.3% below pre-pandemic levels.

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.

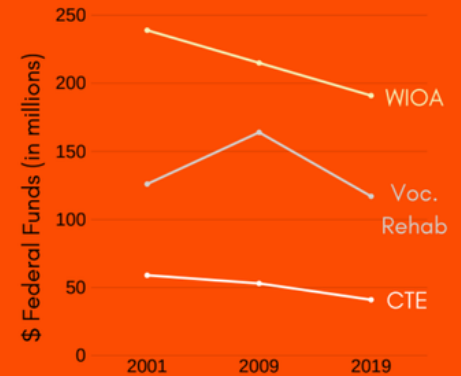
Illinois lacks sufficient funding to re-skill our workforce and address systemic barriers. 95% of workforce funding in Illinois comes from dwindling federal investment, which has decreased more than 30% over the past two decades. State funding for workforce and higher education all but disappeared during the budget crises and has yet to be restored to the scale needed. In 2021 federal WIOA funding was decreased by over 9% from the previous year. 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 women, younger, and BIPOC workers back generations, businesses will struggle to fill open positions, and talented Illinois will continue to struggle to pay their bills.

Percent Change in Employment in Illinois as of August 2021 compared to January 2020

+4.3% High wage workers (>\$60K)
-0.3% Middle wage (\$27K-\$60K)
-40.3% Low wage workers (<\$27K)

Federal Workforce Grants to IL, 2001-2019



As of 2019,

19% of Black workers,
19% of Native American workers,
25% of Latinx workers, &
8% of White workers

were both working full time and also economically insecure.

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 2022 ILGA:



Dedicate state funding for workforce training with a racial and gender equity lens.

- Direct funding to programs that support employer and provider training partnerships, like the Job Training and Economic Development Program (JTED).
- 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.
- Devote revenue from the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew (R3) Program to support job training and workforce development in a variety of sectors.
- 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 - include workforce, skills training, and small business development that is equitable and accessible.
- Invest \$50 million more in MAP grants to move towards providing need-based aid to all eligible students.
- Expand and make permanent funding for programs that offer paid training and work opportunities to low-income youth, like YouthBuild Illinois.
- Appropriate state-funded workforce development dollars specifically to small business owners, prioritizing owners who employ under 20 workers, are self-employed, and who are in majority communities of color.



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

- Support IL Clean Slate, which removes barriers for people with criminal records or convictions.
- [SB3635 / HB 5588](#) Eliminate driver's license suspensions for failure to pay child support and for failure to appear in court.
- [Increase All-State Early Childhood Investments](#) by at least 10% to help expand access to affordable early care and education programs, increase compensation for the early childhood workforce, and subsidize compensation for low- and moderate-income small business care providers. (Including, but not limited to, funding the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG).)
- [SB 835A1](#) Support Paid Sick Days and Paid Family Medical Leave to ensure low-wage workers don't have to lose their jobs or pay due to illness and family emergencies.
- [SB3142/ HB4550](#) Promote evidence based anti-crime and anti-violence solutions through a 6 bill initiative that creates a statewide Department of Returning Resident Affairs to coordinate the provision of holistic, individualized services that respond to the social determinants of justice-involvement, including housing, education, employment, and behavioral health issues and reimagines the provision of reentry services by extending them to an individual's first contact with the criminal legal system.
- Enact licensure reform to create career pathways for immigrant and refugee health professionals with international credentials to advance in the health workforce and support the healthcare needs in the state.
- [HR639](#) Adopt a Young Workers' Bill of Rights for Illinois to ensure young adults do not simply recover from the COVID-19 recession but thrive in the emerging economy.

4 Workforce Policy Pillars for Illinois

Here's what we can do in the 2022 ILGA:



Ensure that no Illinoisan – regardless of race, gender, age, or nationality – lives in poverty by promoting good jobs and a strong safety net.

- [HB4920 / SB3774](#) Expand the state Earned Income Credit to increase tax breaks for lower-income working Illinoisans, and spur spending at local businesses.
- [SB2985](#) End the practice of seizing state tax returns intercept for EITC recipients under the Local Debt Recovery Program.
- [HB703 / SB1643](#) Expand MAP grants to cover certificate programs at community colleges that lead to employment in a high-demand industry.
- [SB1832 / HB3619](#) 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.
- [HB5548](#) Repeal the Earnfare "work for food" policy and reinvest the \$1M program cost into high-quality Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training Programs to leverage federal matching funds.
- [HB5087 & HB4843](#) Invest in the Child Savings Account bill to provide a \$50 seed deposit for children across the state. Include supplemental bonus deposits for children from financially insecure households and a data collection requirement.
- [HB4423 / SB3123](#) Support the COIN II Act to both, increase the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash grant amount to 50% of the Federal Poverty Line and implement a full pass-through and disregard of child support payments for families. Currently, families receiving TANF receive \$100-\$200 depending on the number of children in the household and the state keeps the rest of the child support payments.
- [HB 5139](#) Enact a full and fair wage for tipped workers.
- [SB3925 / HB4720](#) Create the "Human Service Professional Loan Repayment Program" to provide loan repayment assistance to eligible direct service professionals practicing in community-based, human service organizations that contract with or are grant-funded by a state agency.
- [SB3617](#) Ensure a more qualified, competent, and diverse community behavioral health workforce by supporting this Senate omnibus bill that creates a peer training program, a tax credit program, and an Advisory Council to support the employment of persons with mental illnesses and substance use disorders in minority communities.



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.
- Create a planning commission co-led by the Governor's Office and the Department on Aging to research and develop a comprehensive, cross-sector, long-term Strategic Action Plan for Aging Equity. This includes addressing workforce shortages and sustainability needs, career paths, and professional credentialing for home care/direct support workers, healthcare and gerontological careers and services, as well as addressing working caregiver needs and improving opportunities for older workers.

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, service providers, non-profits, community-based organizations, and businesses including:



Connect to learn more:

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