



The Workers' Rights Amendment and Its Impact on Protecting Quality Jobs and Essential Industries in Illinois

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Executive Summary

In November 2022, voters will have the chance to vote on the Workers' Rights Amendment to the Illinois Constitution, which would guarantee the fundamental right of workers to unionize and collectively bargain. The Workers' Rights Amendment would prevent the passage of a state law or local ordinance "that interferes with, negates, or diminishes the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively over their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment and workplace safety."

The Workers' Rights Amendment would support collective bargaining and the ability of workers to organize and join unions. Union workers in Illinois:

- Earn 14 percent more and are 9 percent more likely to have health insurance coverage.
- Are 3 percent less likely to be below poverty, 3 percent less likely to rely on Medicaid, and 2 percent less likely to rely on food stamp government assistance.
- Contribute 8 percent more in state income taxes, after credits and deductions.

By protecting the right to collectively bargain, the Workers' Rights Amendment would be good for the economy. By preventing Illinois' labor market from deteriorating, the Amendment would:

- Protect \$43 billion in annual income for Illinois workers and ensure workers can negotiate pay raises that help deal with high inflation.
- Ensure that 281,000 Illinois workers would not lose their health insurance coverage.
- Prevent 135,000 Illinois workers from suffering pay cuts that cause them to lose their homes.
- Keep 70,000 Illinois workers from falling below the federal poverty line.
- Promote safe workplaces and save 900 lives over a decade, because Illinois experiences 32 percent fewer on-the-job fatalities than states that do not support collective bargaining.

The Workers' Rights Amendment would protect essential workers. Compared to their counterparts in states that do not support collective bargaining, in Illinois:

- Blue-collar construction workers earn 35 percent more, are 17 percent more likely to have health insurance coverage, and are 12 percent more likely to own their homes.
- Police officers, firefighters, and first responders earn 31 percent more, are 1 percent more likely to have health insurance coverage, and are 7 percent more likely to own their homes.
- Pre-K through high school teachers earn 22 percent more, are 2 percent more likely to have health insurance coverage, and are 4 percent more likely to own their homes.
- Registered nurses earn 5 percent more, are 1 percent more likely to have health insurance coverage, and are 2 percent more likely to own their homes.
- Manufacturing production workers earn 3 percent more, are 2 percent more likely to have health insurance coverage, and are 1 percent more likely to own their homes.

The Workers' Rights Amendment would prevent laws from being passed that would interfere in private negotiations between businesses and workers or restrict their ability to bargain collectively. The Workers' Rights Amendment would not only promote superior safety outcomes and a strong middle-class economy for Illinois workers and businesses, but it would also reduce burdens on state taxpayers while reducing turnover costs for employers and ensuring labor market competitiveness in the state's most essential jobs.

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Introduction

In November 2022, Illinois voters will vote on a Constitutional Amendment that would prevent Illinois from passing a state law or local ordinance “that interferes with, negates, or diminishes the right of employees to organize and bargain collectively over their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment and workplace safety” (ILGA, 2021). Passage requires either a majority of those who cast ballots in the election or 60 percent approval from those voting on the question specifically. This Constitutional Amendment, called the Workers’ Rights Amendment, comes during a tight labor market in which workers are reconsidering their priorities, quitting low-quality jobs and accepting good jobs with higher pay, better benefits, and safer workplaces (Fowers & Van Dam, 2021).

Labor unions and collective bargaining have long been associated with middle-class wages, better rates of health insurance coverage, improved outcomes for taxpayers, and superior workplace safety records. On average, union households earn between 10 and 20 percent more than nonunion households (Farber et al., 2018; Schmitt, 2008; Card, 1992). In Illinois, union membership boosts a worker’s hourly wages by 11 percent, on average (Manzo et al., 2020). The U.S. Department of Labor also reports that 95 percent of union workers have access to health care coverage compared with just 69 percent of nonunion workers (BLS, 2019). As a result, union workers contribute more towards the tax base and rely less on social safety net programs (Sojourner & Pacas, 2018). Additionally, research has found that unions improve employee retention, reducing turnover costs for employers and helping them compete in the labor market (Bach & Kinder, 2021).

The 1935 National Labor Relations Act, which established a federal legal right to form unions, identified “the inequality of bargaining power between employees who do not possess full freedom of association or actual liberty of contract and employers who are organized in the corporate or other forms of ownership association” as a cause of deteriorating economic outcomes, such as poor working conditions, depressing wages rates and the purchasing power of workers, and business recessions from lack of demand. To rectify this power imbalance, the law encouraged collective bargaining and the freedom of association (NLRB, 1935). The immediate effects of the federal law were dramatic. Within a decade of passage, the labor movement more than tripled in size, growing from 4 million members to more than 13 million members (Troy, 1965).

However, pushback by powerful special interests led to the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1946, which included a provision allowing states to pass government regulations that prohibit unions and employers from voluntarily including union security clauses in privately negotiated contracts. This provision is sometimes colloquially called a “right-to-work” law. It permits and incentivizes free riding among workers in bargaining units, who can receive all the services and benefits of collective bargaining—such as higher wages, better benefits, and legal representation—without paying anything for them. Requiring unions to represent and provide services to free riders significantly weakens unions and ultimately reduces the resources they have available to advocate for workers (Hogler et al., 2004). Since 2001, seven states have passed these laws and nearly two dozen have introduced, but failed to pass, such measures—including a defeated Illinois bill in 2017. Nine other states have embedded this provision in their constitutions (Steffen, 2018). Today, 27 states have these laws to limit collective bargaining.

Economic research has found that economic and labor market outcomes are worse in states that have passed laws to limit collective bargaining. On average, these states see higher levels of economic inequality, worker earnings that are between 2 and 4 percent lower, and health insurance coverage that is 3 to 5 percent lower (Manzo & Bruno, 2021a; VanHeuvelen, 2020; Manzo & Bruno, 2017; Gould & Kimball, 2015; Shierholz & Gould, 2011; Stevans, 2009). At the same time, job growth is no higher in these states compared to states that support collective bargaining (Manzo & Bruno, 2017; Jones & Shierholz, 2018; Eren & Ozbeklik, 2011). In fact, in 2021, West Virginia Governor Jim Justice, a Republican, lamented that weakening collective bargaining rights in 2016 failed to either create jobs or attract businesses to his state (McElhinny, 2021).

A Constitutional Amendment to strengthen collective bargaining rights is therefore a substantive and important policy matter that warrants an analysis of possible outcomes on several dimensions. Using the extant literature on collective bargaining and data from the *American Community Survey*, Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Illinois Department of Employment Security, this report—conducted by researchers at the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) the Project for Middle Class Renewal (PMCR) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign—examines how the Workers’ Rights Amendment would likely affect collective bargaining, economic activity, and essential workers. The report concludes by recapping key findings.

The Workers’ Rights Amendment and Collective Bargaining

Public approval of unions has surged to its highest level in six decades, with nearly seven-in-ten Americans supporting labor unions (Brenan, 2021). After millions of workers faced new job safety hazards and economic uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation is also experiencing a surge in new worker organizing—from coffee shops to retail outlets to giant warehouses (Elias & Lucas, 2022; Soglin & Mijares Torres, 2022). If approved by voters in November 2022, the Workers’ Rights Amendment would protect the right of workers to organize and join unions. By increasing their bargaining power, passage of the Workers’ Rights Amendment could have important implications for working-class people across Illinois.

FIGURE 1: ECONOMIC AND HEALTH OUTCOMES OF ILLINOIS WORKERS WITHOUT ADVANCED DEGREES, BY UNION STATUS

Economic and Health Outcomes of Illinois Workers without Advanced Degrees (2000-2020)	Union Member	Not a Union Member	Union Difference
Inflation-Adjusted Annual Incomes from Salaries and Wages	\$53,326	\$46,859	+13.8%
Workers with Health Insurance Coverage	93.6%	84.3%	+9.3%
Workers in “Good” or “Excellent” Health (Self-Reported)	69.2%	67.5%	+1.7%

Source(s): Authors’ analysis of 2000-2020 *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* (ASEC) data from respondents from the month of March in each year (Flood et al., 2021). To focus specifically on working-class residents, the analysis is limited to all Illinois workers without advanced degrees (i.e., doctoral, law, medical, professional, and master’s degrees).

Unions have very real effects on labor market outcomes in Illinois (Figure 1). Over the past two decades, union workers in Illinois have earned 14 percent higher annual incomes from wages and salaries, after adjusting for inflation, than their nonunion counterparts. Union workers have been 9

percent more likely to have health insurance coverage and 2 percent more likely to self-report that they are in “good” or “excellent” health.

Higher incomes and health insurance coverage rates translate into lower levels of poverty and less reliance on government assistance programs (Figure 2). Union members in Illinois are, on average, 3 percent less likely to be below the poverty line. They are 3 percent less likely to be on Medicaid. They are also 2 percent less likely to qualify for and receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food stamps and 2 percent less likely to receive Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) assistance.

FIGURE 2: SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF ILLINOIS WORKERS WITHOUT ADVANCED DEGREES, BY UNION STATUS

Poverty and Government Assistance Outcomes of Illinois Workers without Advanced Degrees (2000-2020)	Union Member	Not a Union Member	Union Difference
Percent Below Poverty	2.5%	5.9%	-3.4%
Percent on Medicaid	2.7%	6.2%	-3.4%
Percent on Food Stamps	2.4%	4.4%	-2.0%
Percent on EITC Assistance	6.7%	9.1%	-2.4%

Source(s): Authors’ analysis of 2000-2020 *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* (ASEC) data from respondents from the month of March in each year (Flood et al., 2021). To focus specifically on working-class residents, the analysis is limited to all Illinois workers without advanced degrees (i.e., doctoral, law, medical, professional, and master’s degrees).

In addition to taking less from social safety net programs, working-class union members contribute more to the tax base in Illinois (Figure 3). Union members pay 3 percent more than nonunion members in federal income taxes (after credits and deductions), on average. They also pay 11 percent more in Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA) payroll taxes, which fund Medicare and Social Security. In addition, union members contribute an average of 8 percent more in state income taxes (after credits and deductions) than their nonunion counterparts.

FIGURE 3: TAX CONTRIBUTIONS OF ILLINOIS WORKERS WITHOUT ADVANCED DEGREES, BY UNION STATUS

Tax Contributions of Illinois Workers without Advanced Degrees (2000-2020)	Union Member	Not a Union Member	Union Difference
Federal Income Tax After Credits	\$6,170	\$5,995	+2.9%
Federal FICA Payroll Taxes	\$3,597	\$3,251	+10.7%
State Income Tax After Credits	\$1,839	\$1,705	+7.8%

Source(s): Authors’ analysis of 2000-2020 *Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement* (ASEC) data from respondents from the month of March in each year (Flood et al., 2021). To focus specifically on working-class residents, the analysis is limited to all Illinois workers without advanced degrees (i.e., doctoral, law, medical, professional, and master’s degrees).

The Workers’ Rights Amendment would prevent the diminishment of the right of workers to become union members. The data reveal that, by supporting worker organizing and preserving collective bargaining, the Workers’ Rights Amendment would promote middle-class wages, more health insurance coverage, lower levels of poverty, less reliance on government assistance programs, and positive impacts on public budgets.

The Workers' Rights Amendment and the Economy

The data reveals that collective bargaining has a strong positive effect on economic prosperity. Worker earnings are significantly higher in Illinois than in states where workers' collective bargaining rights are not protected (Figure 4). The average worker earns about \$56,800 per year in income from wages and salaries in Illinois, which is about \$7,400 more per year (or \$142 more per week) than the average worker in a state that does not support collective bargaining.¹ The result is that annual incomes are 15 percent higher in Illinois.

FIGURE 4: LABOR MARKET OUTCOMES OF WORKERS, ILLINOIS VS. STATES THAT DO NOT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Labor Market Outcomes of Workers	State of Illinois	States that Do Not Support Collective Bargaining	Illinois Difference
Inflation-Adjusted Annual Incomes (2017-2019)	\$56,802	\$49,399	+15.0%
Workers with Health Insurance Coverage (2017-2019)	91.7%	86.9%	+4.8%
Workers who Own Homes (2017-2019)	69.3%	67.0%	+2.3%
Workers Below the Poverty Line (2017-2019)	6.2%	7.4%	-1.2%
On-the-Job Fatalities Per 100,000 Workers (2011-2019)	2.76	4.07	-32.2%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017-2019 *American Community Survey* data (Ruggles et al., 2021) as well as 2011-2019 *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries* (CFOI) data (BLS, 2021) and 2011-2019 "GDP & Personal Income" data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce (BEA, 2021).

Illinois also fares better on other economic outcomes (Figure 4). Fully 92 percent of Illinois workers are covered by health insurance plans, which is 5 percent higher than workers in states that do not support collective bargaining rights. Workers in Illinois are 2 percent more likely to own their homes and 1 percent less likely to fall below the poverty line. The on-the-job fatality rate is 4.1 deaths per 100,000 workers in states that do not support collective bargaining and just 2.8 deaths per 100,000 workers in Illinois. Consequently, Illinois workers are 32 percent less likely to suffer fatalities at work.

FIGURE 5: CHANGE IN ILLINOIS IF OUTCOMES BECAME SIMILAR TO STATES THAT DO NOT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

What If Illinois' Labor Market Outcomes Were Similar to States that Do Not Support Collective Bargaining?	Illinois Difference	Potential Change without Amendment
Inflation-Adjusted Annual Incomes	+\$7,403	-\$43,360,900,000
Workers with Health Insurance Coverage	+4.8%	-281,100
Workers who Own Homes	+2.3%	-134,700
Workers Below the Poverty Rate	-1.2%	+70,300
On-the-Job Fatalities (Over 10 Years)	-32.2%	+896

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017-2019 *American Community Survey* data (Ruggles et al., 2021) as well as 2011-2019 *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries* (CFOI) data (BLS, 2021) and 2011-2019 "GDP & Personal Income" data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce (BEA, 2021). Estimates for wages, health insurance coverage, homeownership, and poverty are based on an estimated 5,857,200 workers, which was the total nonfarm employment for Illinois in October 2021 (IDES, 2021). Except for on-the-job fatalities, estimates are rounded to the nearest hundred or nearest \$100,000.

¹ Note that the income estimates are different from previously reported estimates because this section relies on a different dataset and different timeframe while looking at all workers, including those with advanced degrees.

Figure 5 shows what would happen if Illinois' numbers were similar to states that do not support collective bargaining. Based on the \$7,400 annual difference in incomes, Illinois workers would see their incomes decrease by nearly \$43 billion annually. Roughly 281,000 Illinois workers would lose their health insurance coverage, thereby increasing the number of workers relying on government-funded Medicaid and on taxpayer-subsidized plans through Affordable Care Act marketplace exchanges. Another 135,000 workers would be unable to afford their homes and 70,000 would see their incomes decrease so much that they would fall below the federal poverty line. Moreover, nearly 900 additional workers in Illinois would fall victim to on-the-job fatalities over a decade if Illinois' labor market environment deteriorated to the conditions in states that do not support collective bargaining (Figure 5).

Illinois' economy has grown slower than the national average. However, there is no evidence that economic activity would have increased faster in Illinois if it had weakened collective bargaining rights (Figure 6). Instead, data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) at the U.S. Department of Commerce reveals that the economies of free collective-bargaining states grew 3 percent faster between 2010 and 2020 (41 percent) than the economies of states that do not support workers' rights (38 percent).

FIGURE 6: GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT GROWTH, BY STATES THAT DO AND DO NOT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Economic Growth by State (2010-2020)	Gross Domestic Product in 2010	Gross Domestic Product in 2020	GDP Growth	Difference
Free Collective-Bargaining States	\$8,318,463,400,000	\$11,726,969,400,000	+41.0%	+2.6%
States that Do Not Support Collective Bargaining	\$6,569,679,500,000	\$9,090,648,100,000	+38.4%	--

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2010-2020 "GDP & Personal Income" data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce (BEA, 2021).

This is in large part because workers are more productive in states that support workers' rights (Figure 7). Dividing gross domestic product (GDP) by total nonfarm employment yields an average economic output of about \$150,500 per worker in free collective-bargaining states and \$141,300 specifically in Illinois. These productivity levels per worker are, respectively, 23 percent and 15 percent higher than the \$122,700 average for states that do not support collective bargaining.

FIGURE 7: PRODUCTIVITY PER WORKER, ILLINOIS AND STATES THAT DO AND DO NOT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Economic Productivity Per Worker by State (2019)	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	Nonfarm Employment	GDP Per Worker	Difference
Free Collective-Bargaining States	\$11,992,401,000,000	79,674,760	\$150,517	+22.7%
Illinois	\$885,583,000,000	6,267,434	\$141,299	+15.1%
States that Do Not Support Collective Bargaining	\$9,321,131,100,000	75,956,240	\$122,717	--

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2019 "GDP & Personal Income" data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis at the U.S. Department of Commerce (BEA, 2021).

The Workers' Rights Amendment would prevent elected officials from bargaining away workers' rights by interfering in private negotiations between businesses and their workers. The Amendment would protect \$43 billion in labor income, ensure workers have access to health insurance coverage,

enable homeownership, keep poverty from worsening, and promote workplace safety while ensuring that Illinois' workers remain among the most productive in the United States.

The Workers' Rights Amendment and Essential Workers

By ensuring that Illinois workers can organize and bargain collectively over working conditions and workplace safety, the Workers' Rights Amendment would protect labor market outcomes for middle-class workers deemed essential during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 8). Police officers and firefighters earn 31 percent more in Illinois than their counterparts in states where workers' rights are not protected. In addition to these first responders, registered nurses on the frontline of the pandemic earn 5 percent more in Illinois. Preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school teachers earn 22 percent more. Blue-collar construction workers have the highest gains in Illinois, out-earning their equivalents in states that do not support collective bargaining by 35 percent. Manufacturing production employees also earn 3 percent more in Illinois than they do in these other states. The Workers' Rights Amendment would ensure these wage gains are not diminished.

FIGURE 8: REAL INCOMES OF ESSENTIAL WORKERS, ILLINOIS VS. STATES THAT DO NOT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Inflation-Adjusted Annual Incomes (2017-2019)	State of Illinois	States that Do Not Support Collective Bargaining	Illinois Difference
Blue-Collar Construction Workers	\$52,803	\$39,145	+34.9%
Police Officers and Firefighters	\$77,307	\$58,927	+31.2%
P-12 Teachers	\$50,878	\$41,693	+22.0%
Registered Nurses	\$63,272	\$60,079	+5.3%
Production Workers	\$39,585	\$38,426	+3.0%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017-2019 American Community Survey data (Ruggles et al., 2021).

Essential workers do not just earn higher incomes in Illinois, they also experience higher rates of health insurance coverage from being employed in Illinois (Figure 9). First responders, school teachers, registered nurses, and manufacturing production workers are all 1 to 2 percent more likely to be covered by health insurance plans in Illinois than similar workers in states that do not support collective bargaining. Blue-collar construction workers are 17 percent more likely to have health insurance coverage than their counterparts in states that do not support collective bargaining. The Workers' Rights Amendment would protect these health benefits and curb taxpayer costs on public health programs like Medicaid.

FIGURE 9: HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE RATES, ILLINOIS VS. STATES THAT DO NOT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Workers with Health Insurance Coverage (2017-2019)	State of Illinois	States that Do Not Support Collective Bargaining	Illinois Difference
Blue-Collar Construction Workers	79.0%	62.5%	+16.5%
Police Officers and Firefighters	98.6%	97.8%	+0.8%
P-12 Teachers	97.7%	95.8%	+1.9%
Registered Nurses	97.3%	96.7%	+0.7%
Production Workers	88.0%	85.8%	+2.1%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017-2019 American Community Survey data (Ruggles et al., 2021).

Owning a home has long been a central tenant of the American Dream. Research has deemed homeownership an integral part of the middle-class lifestyle, with homeowners increasing their wealth through appreciation in home prices and by accumulating equity with each mortgage payment (Herbert et al., 2013; Schuetz, 2019). Across the board, essential and frontline workers are more likely to own their homes in Illinois than they are in states that do not support collective bargaining (Figure 10). The difference is most noticeable for construction trades workers and first responders. In Illinois, blue-collar construction workers are 12 percent more likely to own their homes and police officers and firefighters are 7 percent more likely to own their homes. Teachers are 4 percent more likely, registered nurses are 2 percent more likely, and manufacturing production workers are 1 percent more likely. By not interfering in the process of workers freely choosing to join unions and bargain with their employers, the Workers' Rights Amendment would continue to support the means that Illinois' working families use to gain access to homeownership, housing stability, and economic security.

FIGURE 10: HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES, ILLINOIS VS. STATES THAT DO NOT SUPPORT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Workers who Own Homes (2017-2019)	State of Illinois	States that Do Not Support Collective Bargaining	Illinois Difference
Blue-Collar Construction Workers	70.6%	58.9%	+11.7%
Police Officers and Firefighters	86.4%	79.2%	+7.3%
P-12 Teachers	80.2%	76.3%	+3.9%
Registered Nurses	79.8%	77.8%	+2.0%
Production Workers	65.1%	64.1%	+1.1%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017-2019 *American Community Survey* data (Ruggles et al., 2021).

In addition to guaranteeing that essential workers are able to collectively bargain to ensure the best outcomes for themselves and their families, the Workers' Rights Amendment can help address labor shortages and reduce turnover costs for businesses. Research shows that high turnover reduces productivity, with 63 percent of the productivity losses occurring prior to the departing workers' exits (Kuhn & Yu, 2019). The result is a significant loss for employers: The cost of turnover is 21 percent of an employee's annual salary (Boushey & Glynn, 2012; Bach & Kinder, 2021).

No region in the United States has escaped the national labor shortage of registered nurses and teachers, including Illinois (ROE26, 2022; SIU Medicine, 2021). The Workers' Rights Amendment can reduce attrition and turnover in these occupations (Bombardieri et. al. 2022). School districts with strong teachers' unions, for example, retain more high-quality teachers, which subsequently improves student achievement (Han, 2015). Nurses' unions promote safe nurse-to-patient ratios that improve both the working conditions of registered nurses and the health outcomes of patients (Dube, Kaplan, & Thompson, 2016). Union nurses are also 8 percent less likely to care for an unsafe number of patients, 4 percent less likely to be considering leaving the profession, and 6 percent less likely to have left nursing positions within the past six months (Dunn et. al. 2022).

Workers in unionized workplaces also have far greater access to training and professional development than nonunion employees (Illinois Future of Work Task Force, 2022). For example, in construction, apprenticeship training is particularly important. Construction apprenticeship programs are that are sponsored jointly by labor unions and signatory employers are cooperatively

administered with standards, trainee wages, and apprentice-to-worker ratios established in collective bargaining agreements. Funding for training in these joint labor-management apprenticeship programs is institutionalized and financed by “cents per hour” contributions that are part of the total wage and fringe benefits package. By contrast, employer-only nonunion programs rely on voluntary contributions from contractors, who often have financial incentives to forgo long-term workforce training investments and slash labor costs to win project bids. For this reason, joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs deliver a stable supply of skilled workers. That is the primary reason why the labor shortage has been much less severe for union contractors, who have been 21 percent less likely to experience delays in project completion times due to shortages of workers (Manzo, Petrucci, & Bruno, 2022).

By protecting collective bargaining and promoting workforce training, the Workers' Rights Amendment can improve both job quality that a growing share of the workforce is seeking and the labor market competitiveness of jobs in essential industries.

Conclusion

By protecting workers' collective bargaining rights and defending the right to organize into unions, the Workers' Rights Amendment supports the capacity of workers in Illinois to earn middle-class compensation, invest in homeownership, work in safe environments, rely less on government assistance programs, and contribute more in taxes towards public budgets. The Workers' Rights Amendment would also guarantee workers' rights to join together to negotiate pay raises that create good-paying jobs that help deal with high inflation.

The Workers' Rights Amendment would also protect essential workers who put their lives on the line to serve Illinois residents. In respecting the right of workers to join unions, the Amendment would mean that police officers and firefighters can continue to receive the training they need to do their jobs, nurses can continue to speak out when they see problems in hospitals without fear of retaliation, teachers can continue to negotiate smaller class sizes and more support staff for students, and blue-collar workers can go through well-funded apprenticeship programs to learn skills that provide middle-class incomes without burdensome student loan debt. The Amendment would support the legal protections that enable workers to speak out about workplace hazards, infectious disease threats, and other health and safety risks without fear of retaliation or job loss. The Workers' Rights Amendment can thus reduce attrition and turnover, helping to address labor shortages in these essential industries.

At its core, the Workers' Rights Amendment protects \$43 billion in worker earnings, prevents hundreds of additional on-the-job fatalities, promotes increased levels of skills training, and supports worker voice and agency in Illinois. The research reveals that, by supporting collective bargaining, the Workers' Rights Amendment would advance the state's interest in creating high-quality jobs and contribute to a strong economy in Illinois.

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