



PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS BOOST DIVERSITY IN CONSTRUCTION

A new report from the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) and the University of Illinois' Project for Middle Class Renewal (PMCR), *The Impact of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois: Evidence from the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Since 2017*, shows that pre-apprenticeship programs are dramatically expanding opportunities for women and Black workers in Illinois' construction industry.

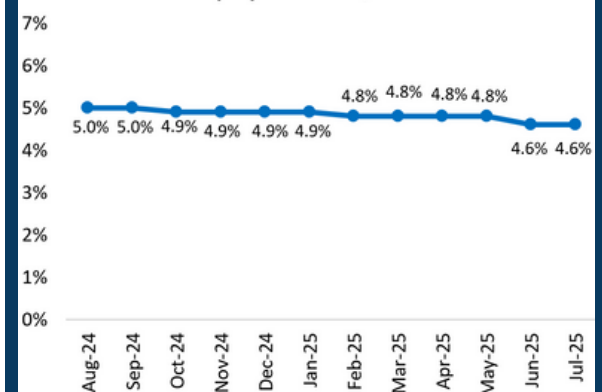
Since 2017, more than 5,800 participants have enrolled in the state's two largest pre-apprenticeship initiatives—the Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) and Illinois Works. Enrollment has fueled a 95% increase in Black apprentices and a 202% increase in female apprentices, making them the fastest-growing groups in the construction workforce.

The study also found these tuition-free programs deliver a 900% return on investment over 10 years, thanks to strong job placements, higher earnings, and wraparound support services like childcare and transportation.

With Illinois investing nearly \$40 million in new pre-apprenticeships tied to clean energy under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, researchers forecast thousands more workers will gain access to career pathways in the trades.

ILLINOIS ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Illinois Unemployment Rate, Past 12 Months



Jobs added (rank), July-24 to July-25 = **+20,300 jobs (24)**

State unemployment rate (rank), July-25 = **4.6% (40)**

Average private sector wage (rank), July-25 = **\$35.15 (16)**

Private sector wage growth from July-24 to July-25 (rank) = **+4.4% (15)**

Illinois Flash Index (as of Aug-25) = **101.7**

ILEPI'S SPRINGFIELD SEMINAR & FUNDRAISER

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15

Join us on Wednesday, October 15 in Springfield for a FREE morning seminar and an evening fundraising reception!

FREE SEMINAR

Learn about key findings from ILEPI research over the last year, with a special focus transit and pension challenges.

8:00am-9:30am

Illinois AFL-CIO
534 S. 2nd Street, #200
Springfield, IL 62701

Breakfast included!

FUNDRAISING RECEPTION

6:00pm-8:00pm

President Abraham Lincoln
Springfield Hotel
701 E Adams Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Sponsorships, ads, and tickets
available!

Visit www.illinoiseipi.org/events to
register and pay online.

We appreciate
your support!



NEW REPORT: UNION MEMBERSHIP GROWING IN ILLINOIS AND MICHIGAN AS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS STRENGTHEN

The 11th annual *State of the Unions* study from the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) and the University of Illinois' Project for Middle Class Renewal (PMCR) finds that while union density is shrinking nationally, states that protect or restore collective bargaining rights are seeing membership gains and faster wage growth.

Illinois added 27,000 union members in 2024, the largest increase since 2017, after voters enshrined collective bargaining rights in the state constitution in 2022. Michigan experienced similar growth, gaining 15,000 new members following the repeal of its so called "right-to-work" law in 2024. By contrast, the 26 "right-to-work" states collectively lost nearly 180,000 union members last year.

The study also highlights the broader benefits of union membership in Illinois. Union workers earn 12 percent higher wages on average, are 8 percent more likely to own homes, and are 5 percent more likely to have health insurance. They are also substantially less likely to rely on government assistance programs such as Medicaid, food stamps, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.

The report concludes that public policy decisions directly impact workers' bargaining power and economic security. As co-author Dr. Robert Bruno said, "The data reveal a clear link between policy choices, bargaining power, and outcomes for working families."

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