



NEWS RELEASE
NEW REPORT ON YOUTH JOBLESSNESS HIGHLIGHTS STATEWIDE CRISIS FOR EMPLOYERS

PRESS CONFERENCE

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INNOVATIONS HIGH SCHOOL, 17 N. STATE ST., 2ND FLOOR, CHICAGO, IL

ILLINOIS – With a well-documented story of critical labor shortages across the country and especially in the [Midwest](#), a new report focuses on the tens of thousands of young people in Illinois, not just young Black and Hispanic males in the state’s inner cities metropolitan areas, but also white youths in the state’s rural western and southern areas, who are out of school and out of work, and who, with an adequate investment of public funds, have the potential to fill those vacant positions.

The report, **Industrial Restructuring and the Continuing Impact on Youth Employment in Illinois**, which breaks down in detail out-of-work and out-of-school and out-of-work numbers for Illinois young people ages 16-24, was released at a May 14 news conference. Researched and written by the **Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois at Chicago** (GCI), it is the latest in a series of studies commissioned by the **Alternative Schools Network** (ASN) and the first to drill down into the situation young people, not just those in metropolitan Chicago but across the state, are experiencing as they search for ways to support themselves.

“The data in this study cries out for stronger federal investments in job training and economic development for youth in our state and across the country,” said **U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin**, D-IL, in an e-mailed statement. “The best anti-poverty, anti-crime, anti-violence program is a job. I applaud the Alternative Schools Network for their work on this critical issue, and I look forward to working with them to create more opportunities for young people to climb the economic ladder.”

The report finds the tragic and continuing repression of African-American communities that leaves young black males worse off than all of their contemporaries, even though their employment situation in Chicago and Cook County has improved in the last couple of years. And, as roiling policy debates over immigration occur, the situation for Chicago’s young Hispanic or Latino youths, especially females, has gotten worse.

But critically high out-of-school-and-out-of-work rates for whites in downstate cities and rural areas show that the employment crisis is not limited to Chicago and Cook County. St. Clair County had the highest percent of out of school and out of work 16 to 19-year olds with 10.5 percent. The highest out of school and out of work rate for 20 to 24-year olds, 25.1 percent, was in a sub-section of Illinois that comprised Alexander, Edwards, Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Massac, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Saline, Union, Wabash, White, and Williamson counties.

“We have not had a comprehensive youth employment program at the federal level in nearly two decades,” said **U.S. Rep. Danny Davis**, D-IL-7. “With the economy booming and employers looking for more workers than they can find, now is the time to bring those programs back. It would be a key piece of the anti-violence puzzle in our communities and it would help the economy grow.”

“Although racial disparities continue to be a profound factor, it is also the case that white residents of mid-size cities and rural areas in part of Illinois are severely affected,” the report’s authors say in the conclusion section. “Give the trends that we have described, we are likely to see exacerbated inequality and disparities in wealth, along with the associated social ills, that will extend far into the future if there are not interventions that reverse the trends.”

“We know about the dire circumstances Black and Hispanic youths are in. But we are finding out that if you are white anywhere else in the state other than Cook and its surrounding counties, you are in decline and have neither the education for jobs where you live or the education or resources for social mobility to get a job.”

In related developments, the State Task Force on Developing Opportunities for Youth and Young Adults Who Are Jobless and Out of School, is holding a series of Youth Employment Hearings titled, **Help Build the Economy, Help Strengthen Our Youth and Communities, Prepare, Educate and Employ Out-of-School and Jobless Youth.**

The first will be held at 9:30 a.m. to noon, May 14, at Southwestern Illinois College, Sam Wolf Granite City Campus, 4950 Maryville Rd., Granite City and will focus on data from Madison and St. Clair counties.

That will be followed by at least two added hearings, the first is tentatively set for June 14 or 15 in Mt. Vernon, and the next for June 25 in south-suburban Chicago.

ABOUT ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS NETWORK

The Alternative Schools Network (ASN) is a not-for-profit organization in Chicago working to provide quality education with a specific emphasis on inner-city children, youth and adults. Since 1973, ASN has been supporting community based and community-run programs to develop and expand training and other educational services in Chicago’s inner-city neighborhoods. In addition to supporting direct services, ASN has been a consistent and effective advocate for community-based services whereby the people involved are active participants in developing and running programs – not passive recipients of services. To shape policies and programs, ASN has built an impressive track record of operating successful education, employment and support service programs. For more information please visit www.asnchicago.org.

ABOUT THE GREAT CITIES INSTITUTE

UIC Great Cities Institute is to link its academic resources with a range of partners to address urban issues by providing research, policy analysis and program development. Tied to the University of Illinois at Chicago Great Cities Commitment, GCI seeks to improve quality of life in Chicago, its metropolitan region and cities throughout the world. <https://greatcities.uic.edu>

For a complete copy of the report: www.asnchicago.org/May2018-Press-Conference

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