



2025 State Policy Agenda

Chicago Women in Trades (CWIT) has a history of more than 40 years devoted to addressing workforce equity in the construction trades by increasing the number of women prepared to compete for and succeed in apprenticeships and non-traditional employment through our direct service training programs, as well as improving opportunity for women to enter and remain in these occupations through technical assistance and advocacy initiatives. With less than 5% of construction trade jobs held by women in Illinois, champions in the General Assembly are critical to advancing our work.

Illinois, through the committed work of the General Assembly in collaboration with Governor Pritzker, has created first-in-the-nation policies and investments to ensure equal access to opportunities in the union construction trades, and to increase gender and racial equity in good jobs that create career pathways to economic security.

In this moment of unprecedented attacks from the Trump Administration on the progress that has been made towards equity and inclusion, the Governor and the General Assembly must support and strengthen existing laws and funding streams to ensure that good jobs remain available to every Illinoisan, and our work sites remain safe for all workers.



HR 161 – Equal Opportunity for Women in the Trades

In March of 2025, CWIT participated in Tradeswomen Take Over Springfield, supporting House Resolution 161, sponsored by Leader Lisa Hernandez, that affirms the State of Illinois's commitment to expanding workforce opportunities for all individuals pursuing a career in the trades through the following key demands:

Equitable Hiring - Illinois agencies should only contract with employers that commit to upholding the State's values and workers' rights, reject workplace discrimination, and are held accountable to state laws.

Accountability - Illinois must use all available tools, including but not limited to data reporting, contracting language, bid incentives, public oversight, project labor agreements, and project monitoring, to ensure that contractors are committed to creating respectful worksites.

Investment – The state has invested millions of dollars in innovative programs to increase access to high-wage careers in the construction trades. While these programs have a record of graduating women and people of color, we must commit to expanding opportunities for our workforce that include individuals who have been historically underserved.

FY 2026 State Budget

While the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is by far the largest investment that the state manages in workforce development, in recent years, Illinois has developed more targeted and flexible funding that addresses occupational segregation as well as barriers to entry and retention in the workforce. These investments are maintained in Governor Pritzker’s proposed FY 2026 budget.

Job Training and Economic Development (JTED)

JTED is one of the state’s only investments in job development outside of WIOA, and its corresponding federal administrative burdens. It provided flexibility for programming, and funding focused solely on barrier reduction for workers facing economic challenges like housing, transportation, and more. JTED was revitalized under the state’s appropriations of federal COVID-relief dollars, and while funding is maintained in FY2026, it is uncertain whether it will be renewed after this year, when the federal funds are no longer available.

FY 2025 Appropriation	FY 2025 Expenditures	FY 2026 Appropriation
\$41.7 Million	\$31.6 Million	\$10.2 Million

Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship (Capital Budget)

Illinois Works was an innovative program developed along with the passage of the 2019 Capital Bill. It included substantial funding for pre-apprenticeship training to build a diverse pipeline of qualified individuals from every community ready to work on state capital projects, while also creating mandates and incentives for them to be hired on those projects through apprenticeship requirements and bid credits. While the bid credit was just implemented in 2024, the Illinois Works pre-apprenticeship program has been graduating higher numbers of women and people of color every year since 2022. In FY 2024, 76% of program participants were people of color, and 24% were women.

FY 2025 Appropriation	FY 2025 Expenditures	FY 2025 Appropriation
\$50 Million	\$20 Million	\$50 Million

Other Funding: Highway Construction Career Training Program (HCCTP)

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has been using a small amount of federal funds and a substantial amount of state road funds for HCCTP, a pre-apprenticeship program run through MOUs with community colleges, as well as a financial incentive to IDOT contractors who hire graduates. Because of the way that dollars are distributed, it is not included in the annual appropriation process. According to FOIA results, in FY2023 the state planned to spend \$6.6 million on the program, with less than 4% of the funding coming from the Federal Highway Administration.

Potential Funding: Highway Formula Funds

IDOT has additional opportunities to invest in workforce development which should be explored. The 2021 federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides states the ability to target formula highway funding so that surface transportation projects provide jobs to communities in need of increased economic security under 23 U.S.C. § 504(e). IDOT should invest in expanded supportive services and workforce development as part of any infrastructure project to increase state-wide capacity to provide opportunities for underrepresented groups to work in these construction jobs, with special emphasis on maximizing opportunities for women and people of color. The supportive services eligible for this funding include pre-apprenticeship training programs; childcare; tools; workwear; retention services (including support groups, mentoring, and peer networking); stipends; and application fees and other costs of entering registered apprenticeship programs and required pre-employment training. Implementation of this provision under Trump must still be evaluated.

Key State Laws

There are several state laws that have been critical to increasing access to opportunity and centering workforce equity on state-funded construction projects. The implementation and enforcement of these policies are critical, particularly considering the dismantling of federal protections, and fierce attacks on worker rights, equity and diversity.

Illinois Works Job Program Act (30 ILCS 559/20) – As mentioned elsewhere, Illinois Works was included as part of the 2019 capital bill passed by the General Assembly. The Pre-Apprenticeship program has funded over 40 programs and trained more than 4,000 Illinoisans for careers in the construction trades. The law also includes bid incentives for contractors on state-funded programs who hire graduates and retain them on jobs throughout their apprenticeship, as well as a requirement to have a percentage of their work

done by apprentices, of which 50% should be graduates from a state-funded pre-apprenticeship program.

Prevailing Wage Act (820 ILCS 130) – Applicable to publicly funded projects across the state of Illinois, it requires wage standards and reporting from contractors. In 2023, that reporting was expanded to include the demographics of their workforce including race, gender, and ethnicity for all public works projects, and made transparent through public reports. Quarterly reports of this information are available through the Illinois Department of Labor.

Project Labor Agreement Act (30 ILCS 571) – State agencies that enter into Project Labor Agreements should establish goals for women and minorities in both apprenticeship and overall work hours. The implementation and effectiveness of this requirement has not been evaluated.

Responsible Bidder Code (30 ILCS 500/30) – Explicitly included compliance with federal Executive Order 11246 that required contractors to take specific actions to ensure equal employment opportunity for women and minorities on construction projects. Unfortunately, this federal EO was overturned by the Trump Administration, weakening the state's ability to require compliance.

Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/2-109) – Requires that state contractors have an anti-harassment policy and conduct annual anti-harassment trainings. As the Trump Administration has redirected the focus of the federal civil rights entities like the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the USDOL Office of Apprenticeship and Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs away from sexual and racial harassment, state implementation of the Illinois Human Rights Act through the Illinois Department of Human Rights will be critical to ensure that women, immigrants, and racial and gender minorities are able to experience safe worksites that are free from discrimination and harassment.

To partner with Chicago Women in Trades on initiatives to enhance workforce equity in construction and other nontraditional, high-wage careers, contact:

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