

Creating Pathways for Youth Employment Act

Sen. Dick Durbin & Rep. Robin Kelly

Youth who face barriers to employment, including discrimination, childhood poverty, homelessness, involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice system, or living in a disconnected community, are significantly less likely to find and keep a job later in life. Yet, employment between the ages of 14 and 24 can significantly improve adult employment prospects, including higher earnings, lower rates of poverty, and better overall health.

The Need in Our Communities

In 2014, more than 5 million youth ages 16 to 24 were disconnected from both work and school nationwide.

- For youth of color in Chicago, joblessness is chronic and concentrated.
- Among youth ages 16 to 19 in Chicago, 84.9 percent of Black youth and 81.5 percent of Hispanic youth were out of work in 2015.
- Among youth ages 20 to 24 in Chicago, 60.2 percent of Black youth and 33.2 percent of Hispanic youth were out of work in 2015.
- A 2014 study found that among youth participating in Chicago's youth summer employment program, violent crime arrests decreased by nearly 43 percent over a 16-month period.

In urban, suburban, and rural areas nationwide, residents of neighborhoods with highly concentrated poverty and unemployment are significantly more likely to become victims of violent crime.

The Solution: Nothing Stops a Bullet like a Job

Too many youth who are faced with chronic unemployment are living in communities that lack the resources to help youth stay in school or find a job. The federal government needs to be an engaged partner by providing resources that make it easier to create and expand summer and year-round youth employment programs that serve youth in disadvantaged communities.

The Creating Pathways for Youth Employment Act

- Invest in Summer & Year-Round Youth Employment Opportunities. Establish five-year, competitive grant programs that provide financial support for communities seeking to create, improve, or grow summer and year-round employment opportunities for youth ages 14-24.
- Encourage Innovation. Planning grants would provide eligible entities with up to \$200,000 for 12 months to plan new summer or year-round employment programs for eligible youth.
- Expand Employment Services. Implementation grants would provide recipients with up to \$5 million over three years to expand or enhance summer or year-round employment programs.
- Encourage Mentorship. Require grant recipients to provide or connect youth with positive, supportive adult relationships, including mentors trained in trauma-informed care, job coaches, or peer mentors.
- Help youth develop lifelong employment skills. Grant recipients will assist eligible youth in developing core work-readiness skills, including financial literacy, technical skills, and soft-employment skills such as communication and problem solving.
- Encourage Partnerships. Require grant recipients to partner with other state and local entities in implementing the program and would give preference to recipients that have developed a plan to increase private-sector engagement and job placement in summer or year-round employment opportunities.