

The Importance of Labor Unions

Labor Unions provide many benefits to workers and their families and have for decades. They provide better pay, better working conditions, better benefits, retirement aid, and injury aid. Unions led the efforts to stop child labor in the 1930s. During the same time, they were able to create the standard 40-hour workweek which has prevented injuries and exhaustion.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury has an article on their website outlining unions and the economy. The middle class makes up a lot of this country and unions have helped the middle class have increasing wages and stability. Through this, there is also increased job satisfaction which decreases the turnover rate and increases productivity. Most people who say they like or dislike their job explain it is because of non-wage reasons. Although unions can help with wages, it is all of the non-wage benefits that come with them that make them so important. These benefits include retirement plans, medical, life insurance, childcare, employee assistance, and more. When a worker feels supported and has a union behind them, they are overall more satisfied. Not only are unionized workplaces experiencing the positive effects, but non-unionized workplaces do as well. This is because they have to be competitive with unionized spaces in order to draw in workers. Unions have the potential to continue to level out the work arena by continuing to have benefits for everyone under their wing.

Working in healthcare, I have seen firsthand how important unions are to hospital workers. Society depends on hospitals, and nurses are the backbones of them. The last few years has seen increased focus on rights of hospital workers through their unions. Because they are apart of unions, they are able to strike and fight for their own rights. Without unions, these nurses and workers would likely be unable to strike as the unions usually have a strike fund. This makes it able for workers to still have some money coming in during that time. It makes fighting for

their basic rights and workable conditions doable in a time where even one day of lost wages could be detrimental to one person or a whole family.

In my personal life, labor unions have impacted many family members. I have multiple relatives who are veterans and, because of labor unions, they are able to enjoy retirement without worrying about health care or daily living. My stepmom has been a member of the Teamsters union for 21 years. It has helped provide her with the ability to work in a historically male industry with equal pay, benefits, and opportunity. It has helped provide for our family and we are able to have great healthcare, which has been the thing that has affected me the most. I want to be a doctor and while going through my residency, union help will be more important than ever. In the past decade, there has been an increased call for unions to help protect doctors in their residency from being overworked. My stepmom will be able to have health insurance benefits for life for her and my father. The union allows her to have a pension so that she can retire comfortably and not work until she dies just to have enough money to live. I am currently able to not worry about having a full time job because of her health benefits. I am able to have great healthcare with paying a minimum amount compared to what I would have to without it or even a different type of insurance.

As a shop steward, my stepmom has been able to work with Teamsters and her company to negotiate contracts and discuss issues in the workplace. This has given her a voice in her working conditions for herself and her coworkers. She has had the opportunity to travel and see more of the country by attending Teamsters conferences (Canada, Nashville, Vegas, Reno and this coming summer she will be going to Puerto Rico. None of this would be possible without unions. They are important for individual workers and their benefits span the whole country.