

BERNARD SANDERS  
VERMONT

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PENSIONS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4504

332 SENATE DIRKSEN OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510  
(202) 224-5141

1 CHURCH STREET, 3RD FLOOR  
BURLINGTON, VT 05401  
(802) 862-0697  
1 (800) 339-9834

[www.sanders.senate.gov](http://www.sanders.senate.gov)

February 27, 2018

Dear Illinois State Graduate Assistant:

I understand that you and your colleagues are deciding whether graduate assistants at Illinois State University will have the right to union representation.

It is not my intention to tell you how to make this determination. That is your decision to make. What I will tell you is that I have had the opportunity to collaborate with thousands of workers across our country who are members of unions – including many in the field of education. These workers formed unions to improve the conditions of their employment, and to have a greater voice. For them, forming a union means that they now have the opportunity to sit down as equals with management to negotiate a legally binding contract covering all aspects of their wages, benefits, and working conditions.

Nationally, on average, union workers earn 25 percent more than non-union workers, and they have significantly better benefits and working conditions. Having a union ends the arrangement where an employer unilaterally makes all the decisions and calls all the shots. Rather, unionized workers have the legal right to collectively bargain with the employer regarding the issues they have identified as needing attention or improvement.

I respect the critical work you do every day, and wish you the best in your efforts to create a democratic workplace where your voice can really be heard.

Sincerely,



BERNARD SANDERS  
UNITED STATES SENATOR