Working for less in Springfield: Most common jobs pay too little

The economy comes down to people: people who work, buy and sell. An economy that relies on working people who can’t afford to get by is shaky even in the best of times. Now more than ever, Ohioans need leaders who put people first. Reporting to work in the midst of a pandemic is a frightening new reality for many working Ohioans. Others are out of work to comply with Gov. DeWine’s stay-at-home order. Many still wait for unemployment compensation to arrive. Many have lost health insurance and some worry how they will cope if they or a family member falls ill.

As Ohioans scramble to take care of one another and meet basic needs, low wages compound the hardship. New data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show a jobs landscape already drastically outmoded. More than 9,800 Clark County residents who were working this March are out of work today.¹ But looking at the jobs that dominated greater Springfield through May of 2019 sheds light on the challenges workers still at or recently laid off from work face today. These data show that even before the pandemic and after a decade of economic growth, many people in Springfield and its surrounding communities lived on the brink.

Too many greater Springfield jobs pay too little. Employers in seven of the MSA’s largest occupations paid so little in 2019 that a family of three would need food aid. Statewide, just four of the top 10 jobs paid so little back in 2000. The Springfield MSA was designated later. Wages so low would not even have been possible half a century ago. At its peak in 1968, the federal minimum wage was worth over $12 per hour in today’s dollars: more than the median wage in six of Springfield’s 10 most common jobs.

Paltry wages left many with no savings to withstand a coronavirus layoff. Policy Matters Ohio has set out four policy priorities to help working people through the crisis and beyond. Ohio lawmakers can protect people today and build a stronger state for tomorrow by protecting essential workers, shoring up unemployment comp, providing paid sick leave, and making sure all working people, no matter what job they do, get a fair return for their work.