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To be honest, I never really thought of what being part of a union family meant until I read this essay prompt. Once I started to think about it, it became apparent that there are a lot of similarities between my immediate biological family and my union family. There are many benefits that I am sad to say I previously took for granted. Some of these benefits are paid time off, health care benefits, disability benefits and a pension. My family is fortunate to receive many of these benefits from being part of the union family. My Mom and my Dad are both members of a union and I have heard them talk about how privileged we are to be a part of this family. Like my immediate family, we sometimes need to make decisions for the best interests of the larger family as a whole. Our union family shares a common interest with each other and focuses on the impacts are that their particular career and services or products they provide. Another similarity between the two is that your family has your back. There are times when we do not agree but when it comes to what is really important we are there for each other and support one another. When I think of being a part of the union, I think this is particularly true.

Our immediate family is part of this larger union family and there is strength in large numbers which equates to more power such as bargaining effectiveness. Thus, it is more difficult for a company to take benefits away from the workers if the family sticks together. For my father, he started out with an associate degree and was a drafting apprentice and being part of a union allowed him to learn much of his trade by on-the-job training. This example reminded me of what it is like to be a family. I have a younger sister and being part of the family, one of my responsibilities is to help teach her new things.

My father has been on the second level grievance committee for 15 years. He meets with human resources and the union representative to discuss a breach of contract and to support his fellow union member. Being that my father has been a part of the union, a union representative and on this grievance committee for so long, he is familiar with past practice and can use that knowledge and experience to advocate for his union family member. When I think of a union family, this is another example of how they support each other. Being a part of the union and supporting each other in this way gives each member a voice and they know they have someone to help them in ensuring they are heard and treated fairly. Having a voice to speak up for others is important and something I have found I have a natural tendency to do, especially for those that are differently abled. Like being a part of a union family, I am always looking for a way to help and advocate for others.

Another important benefit that the union fights for which I personally think is very important is vacation time and personal time off. As a family, it is important to take a break to spend quality time together and create those special memories. Without the union fighting for this, we may not have these memories to cherish for years to come. The personal time off is also important because I can remember times when I was younger and had to stay home sick from school and because of this benefit, my father was able to stay home and take care of me. He did not have to worry about work and could focus on me which was very comforting at that time. He was also able to take time off to attend my swim meets and volunteered to run the computer at the timing table. Because of his time off, not only did it have an impact on me but on the swimming community as well. This is another reason why I am thankful for having the opportunity to write this essay because it has allowed me to recognize everything the union and our union family has done for each other.

When thinking about how to answer this prompt, I thought about the opposite and what would happen if we were not part of a union family. I instantly thought of instances where my parents were able to be at important events and friends did not have parents able to be there. As I have grown older, I recognize the importance of this and the impact it has had on my childhood. Thank you for taking the time to read this and fighting for me and my family, I would be sincerely appreciative if you could support me as I continue on to

higher education. The benefits of being a part of this union family are certainly something I do not take for granted.