

1 AN ACT concerning education.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the 21st  
5 Century Scholars Act.

6 Section 5. Findings and purpose.

7 (a) The General Assembly finds that one of the greatest  
8 barriers to access to college and success in college is  
9 adequate preparation for academic work at the college-level.  
10 The General Assembly also finds that large numbers of students  
11 are required to take remedial education courses before they are  
12 ready for college-level courses, particularly in writing and  
13 mathematics. The General Assembly further acknowledges that  
14 poor academic preparation may create an often insurmountable  
15 barrier to college or career success and result in limited,  
16 needs-based, financial aid being used on substantial remedial  
17 coursework.

18 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly to provide an  
19 incentive for low-income Illinois students to improve their  
20 academic preparation for postsecondary education. The General  
21 Assembly acknowledges that, in addition to the poor academic  
22 preparation of low-income students, the lack of information and  
23 support services on financial aid and college and career

1 readiness create significant barriers to college and career  
2 success.

3 (c) This Act is intended to leverage this State's  
4 successful, needs-based Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants to  
5 low-income students with a voluntary, school district-based,  
6 incentive program for improved academic preparation.

7 Section 10. Definitions.

8 "Commission" means the Illinois Student Assistance  
9 Commission.

10 "Eligible student" means a student who meets all of the  
11 following requirements at the time of eligibility:

12 (1) Is a resident of this State.

13 (2) Is enrolled in grade 8 at a public or an  
14 accredited, nonpublic school.

15 (3) Is eligible for free or reduced-price lunches under  
16 the National School Lunch Program.

17 (4) Agrees in writing, together with the student's  
18 custodial parents or guardian, that the student will do the  
19 following:

20 (A) graduate from an approved high school, as  
21 defined in the Higher Education Student Assistance  
22 Act;

23 (B) complete the 21st Century Scholars Curriculum;

24 (C) have no felony convictions;

25 (D) apply (i) to an institution of higher learning

1           for admission and (ii) for any federal and State  
2           student financial assistance available to the student  
3           to attend an institution of higher learning; and

4                   (E) achieve a cumulative grade point average upon  
5           graduation of at least a 2.0 on a 4.0 grading scale (or  
6           its equivalent if another grading scale is used) for  
7           courses taken during grades 9, 10, 11, and 12.

8           "Institution of higher learning" means "institution of  
9           higher learning" as defined in the Higher Education Student  
10          Assistance Act.

11          "Program" means the 21st Century Scholars Program  
12          established under this Act.

13          "Scholarship applicant" means a student who meets all of  
14          the following requirements:

15                   (1) Was an eligible student.

16                   (2) Is a resident of this State.

17                   (3) Has graduated from an approved high school, as  
18          defined in the Higher Education Student Assistance Act, and  
19          completed the 21st Century Scholars Curriculum.

20                   (4) Has been accepted to attend an institution of  
21          higher learning in this State as a full-time student.

22                   (5) Has timely filed an application for other types of  
23          financial assistance available to the student from the  
24          State and federal government.

25          "Tuition scholarship" means financial assistance provided  
26          under Section 15 of this Act to a student to offset the costs

1 of tuition and other mandatory fees incurred by the student in  
2 attending an institution of higher learning. A full-tuition  
3 scholarship includes the undergraduate tuition and other  
4 mandatory service and activity fees, rounded to the nearest  
5 whole dollar and as further defined in Section 15 of this Act.

6 "21st Century Scholars Curriculum" includes no less than 15  
7 units of high school coursework from the following 5  
8 categories:

9 (1) at least 4 years of English, including written and  
10 oral communications and literature, of which up to 2 years  
11 may be collegiate level instruction;

12 (2) at least 3 years of social studies, including  
13 history and government;

14 (3) at least 3 years of mathematics (introductory  
15 through advanced algebra, geometry, or trigonometry);

16 (4) at least 3 years of science (laboratory sciences);  
17 and

18 (5) at least 2 years of electives in foreign language,  
19 music, vocational education, or art.

20 "21st Century Scholars" means students who have been  
21 awarded a tuition scholarship by the Commission to attend an  
22 institution of higher learning under this Act.

23 "Participating school district" means a school district  
24 that meets the requirements of Section 25 of this Act.

25 Section 15. Scholarship amount; total award.

1           (a) Subject to appropriation, the Commission shall provide  
2 annual tuition scholarships to scholarship applicants who  
3 qualify under Section 20 of this Act in an amount that is equal  
4 to the lowest of the following amounts:

5           (1) If the scholarship applicant attends a public  
6 institution of higher learning and:

7           (A) receives no other financial assistance  
8 specifically designated for tuition and other  
9 mandatory fees, a full-tuition scholarship to the  
10 institution of higher learning shall be awarded; or

11           (B) receives other financial assistance  
12 specifically designated for tuition and other  
13 mandatory fees, the balance required to attend the  
14 institution of higher learning shall be awarded, not to  
15 exceed the amount described in clause (A) of this  
16 subdivision (1).

17           (2) If the scholarship applicant attends a private  
18 institution of higher learning and:

19           (A) receives no other financial assistance  
20 specifically designated for tuition and other  
21 mandatory fees, an average of the full-tuition  
22 scholarship amounts for all public universities in  
23 this State, as determined by the Commission, shall be  
24 awarded; or

25           (B) receives other financial assistance  
26 specifically designated for tuition and other

1           mandatory fees, the balance required to attend the  
2           institution of higher learning shall be awarded, not to  
3           exceed the amount described in clause (A) of this  
4           subdivision (2).

5           (b) Each tuition scholarship awarded under this Act is  
6           renewable under Section 20 of this Act for a total scholarship  
7           award that does not exceed the equivalent of 135 credit hours.

8           Section 20. Application and renewal of tuition  
9           scholarship.

10          (a) To initially qualify for a tuition scholarship under  
11          this Act, a scholarship applicant must do all of the following:

12                 (1) Demonstrate acceptance as a full-time student by an  
13                 institution of higher learning.

14                 (2) Submit to the Commission all of the information and  
15                 evidence required by the Commission to determine  
16                 eligibility as a scholarship applicant.

17                 (3) Agree to release student record information, such  
18                 as grades and his or her chosen field of study, to the  
19                 Commission for the purpose of assessing the educational  
20                 persistence of 21st Century Scholars.

21          (b) To qualify for tuition scholarship renewal under this  
22          Act, a scholarship recipient must do all of the following:

23                 (1) Submit to the Commission a renewal application and  
24                 evidence required by the Commission.

25                 (2) Continue to comply with the requirements set forth

1 in subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this Section.

2 (3) Continue to be a student in good standing at the  
3 institution of higher learning.

4 Section 25. Responsibilities and obligations. The State,  
5 the participating school district, and the student shall enter  
6 into a 3-part compact as follows:

7 (1) At a minimum, the school district shall agree to  
8 provide a 21st Century Scholars Curriculum to eligible  
9 students and offer all of the following:

10 (A) Academic support for satisfactory completion  
11 of courses.

12 (B) Guidance to eligible students enrolled in  
13 rigorous courses that will prepare them for  
14 college-level classes and ameliorate the need for  
15 remedial coursework at institutions of higher  
16 learning.

17 (C) Assistance in applying for applicable State  
18 and federal financial aid opportunities.

19 (D) Information about the full range of higher  
20 education options.

21 (E) Assistance with applying and enrolling at an  
22 institution of higher learning.

23 (F) Individualized support as necessary to  
24 facilitate the purpose of this Act.

25 (G) Opportunities for parents or legal guardians

1 to participate in activities designed to support the  
2 academic preparation and collegiate aspirations of  
3 their children.

4 The participating school district shall report  
5 annually to the Commission on the number of eligible  
6 students enrolled in the Program.

7 (2) The eligible student agrees to do all of the  
8 following:

9 (A) Enroll in a 21st Century Scholars Curriculum  
10 consisting of the courses delineated in Section 10 of  
11 this Act.

12 (B) Maintain at least a 2.0 on a 4.0 grading scale  
13 (or its equivalent).

14 (C) Participate in academic support services, such  
15 as mentoring and tutoring, as developed by the school  
16 district.

17 (D) Participate in activities designed to assist  
18 in the college search, application, and financial aid  
19 processes.

20 (E) Apply to at least one institution of higher  
21 learning.

22 (3) The Commission agrees to certify school districts  
23 that provide the 21st Century Curriculum and meet the  
24 requirements of subdivision (1) of this Section. Subject to  
25 State appropriations, the Commission shall also provide a  
26 tuition scholarship to 21st Century Scholars.

1           Section 90. Rules. The Commission shall adopt rules to  
2 implement this Act, including all of the following:

3           (1) Rules establishing additional criteria for the  
4 tuition scholarships and an appeals process for students  
5 denied tuition scholarships.

6           (2) Notwithstanding the definition of "eligible  
7 students" under Section 5 of this Act, rules that may  
8 include students who are in grades other than grade 8 as  
9 eligible students.

10          (3) Rules regarding mentoring, outreach, and student  
11 services programs and partnerships with school districts  
12 and institutions of higher learning.

13          Section 95. Reports on awards. The Commission shall  
14 prepare a statistical report on a fiscal year basis that  
15 describes awards to 21st Century Scholars attending  
16 institutions of higher learning and assessing the educational  
17 persistence of 21st Century Scholars under this Act. The report  
18 shall be filed with the General Assembly on or before August 15  
19 of the year following the fiscal year covered in the report.