

SB1322



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

SB1322

Introduced 1/28/2025, by Sen. Javier L. Cervantes

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Mental Health Professional Career Scholarship Act. Requires the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to create the Mental Health Professional Career Scholarship Program to award scholarships to Illinois students pursuing a mental health professional career in order to increase diversity rates by recruiting individuals to work in mental health fields in the public sector or mental health jobs that have a high demand for new employees and retain those individuals. Sets forth provisions concerning the selection of recipients, the amount of assistance, applications for assistance, the payment of assistance, administering the scholarship program, and rulemaking.

LRB104 07394 LNS 17435 b

A BILL FOR

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 Mental
5 Health Professional Career Scholarship Act.

6 Section 5. Definitions. As used in this Act:

7 "Eligible noncitizen" means an individual who is not a
8 permanent resident of the United States and does not meet the
9 eligibility criteria for federal student assistance but who
10 does meet all of the following criteria:

11 (1) the individual resided with the individual's
12 parent or guardian while attending a public or nonpublic
13 high school in this State;

14 (2) the individual graduated from a public or
15 nonpublic high school in this State or received a State of
16 Illinois High School Diploma;

17 (3) the individual attended school in this State for
18 at least 3 years as of the date the individual graduated
19 from high school in this State or received a State of
20 Illinois High School Diploma;

21 (4) the individual provides an affidavit stating that
22 the individual will file an application to become a
23 permanent resident of the United States at the earliest

1 opportunity the individual is eligible to do so; and

2 (5) the individual has not established a residence
3 outside of this State.

4 "Qualifying degree" means a degree with a focus on
5 professional counseling, professional therapy, social work,
6 psychology, or psychiatry or a degree to become a mental
7 health nurse practitioner or psychiatric pharmacist.

8 Section 10. Mental Health Professional Career Scholarship
9 Program.

10 (a) In addition to scholarships awarded under the Equity
11 and Representation in Health Care Act and the Mental Health
12 Graduate Education Scholarship Act, the Commission shall
13 create the Mental Health Professional Career Scholarship
14 Program to award scholarships to Illinois students pursuing a
15 mental health professional career in order to increase
16 diversity rates by recruiting individuals to work in mental
17 health fields in the public sector or mental health jobs that
18 have a high demand for new employees and retain those
19 individuals.

20 (b) Beginning with the 2026-2027 academic year, the
21 Commission shall, each year, receive and consider applications
22 for scholarship assistance under this Act. An applicant is
23 eligible for a scholarship under this Act if the Commission
24 finds that the applicant meets all of the following
25 qualifications:

1 (1) The applicant is a United States citizen or
2 eligible noncitizen and a resident of this State.

3 (2) The applicant has graduated from an approved high
4 school, as defined in the Higher Education Student
5 Assistance Act, or has received a State of Illinois High
6 School Diploma.

7 (3) The applicant is enrolled in an institution of
8 higher learning, as defined in the Higher Education
9 Student Assistance Act, is pursuing a qualifying degree,
10 and is maintaining a cumulative grade point average of at
11 least a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale or the equivalent as determined
12 by the Commission.

13 (c) Scholarship recipients shall be selected from among
14 qualified applicants. However, preference may be given to the
15 following:

16 (1) applicants who demonstrate academic excellence;

17 (2) applicants who demonstrate financial need;

18 (3) an applicant who is a minority student, as defined
19 in Section 50 of Higher Education Student Assistance Act;
20 and

21 (4) previous recipients of assistance under this Act,
22 provided they continue to maintain eligibility and
23 satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the
24 institution of higher learning at which they are enrolled.

25 Section 15. Amount of assistance.

1 (a) The total amount of scholarship assistance awarded by
2 the Commission under this Act to an individual in any given
3 fiscal year, when added to other financial assistance awarded
4 to that individual for that year, shall not exceed the cost of
5 attendance at the institution of higher learning at which the
6 student is enrolled.

7 (b) A recipient may receive up to 8 semesters of
8 scholarship assistance under this Act.

9 Section 20. Applications for assistance. All applications
10 for scholarship assistance to be awarded under this Act shall
11 be made to the Commission in a form as set forth by the
12 Commission. The form of application and the information
13 required to be set forth in the application shall be
14 determined by the Commission, and the Commission shall require
15 eligible applicants to submit with their applications such
16 supporting documents as the Commission deems necessary.

17 Section 25. Payment of assistance. Subject to a separate
18 appropriation made for such purposes, payment of any
19 scholarship awarded under this Act shall be determined by the
20 Commission. All scholarship funds distributed in accordance
21 with this Act shall be paid to the institution of higher
22 learning on behalf of the recipients. Scholarship funds are
23 applicable toward 2 semesters of enrollment within an academic
24 year.

1 Section 90. Administration and rulemaking. The Commission
2 shall administer the scholarship program established by this
3 Act and shall make all necessary and proper rules not
4 inconsistent with this Act for its effective implementation.