

SB3154



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

SB3154

Introduced 2/2/2026, by Sen. Christopher Belt

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

110 ILCS 947/65.135 new

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. Requires the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to establish the Adult Learner Flexible Education Grant Program to facilitate access to online postsecondary education for adults over the age of 25. Sets forth application requirements and eligibility. Provides that grants are applicable only to tuition and mandatory fees. Effective July 1, 2026.

LRB104 17980 LNS 31417 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 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is
5 amended by adding Section 65.135 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/65.135 new)

7 Sec. 65.135. Adult Learner Flexible Education Grant
8 Program.

9 (a) In this Section:

10 "Qualified institution" means either a qualified
11 institution, as defined in Section 10, or a not-for-profit
12 postsecondary institution that is accredited by a regional
13 accrediting organization recognized by the Board of Higher
14 Education or the United States Department of Education and
15 that meets all of the following criteria:

16 (1) The institution was originally chartered and is
17 currently operating as a not-for-profit entity.

18 (2) The institution's 3-year federal student loan
19 cohort default rate, as published by the United States
20 Department of Education, does not exceed 10%.

21 (3) The institution's average annual cost of full-time
22 tuition and mandatory fees over the preceding 4 academic
23 years is less than the average annual cost of full-time

1 tuition and mandatory fees at public universities in this
2 State over the preceding 4 academic years, based on data
3 published by the United States Department of Education.

4 (4) The institution participates in the federal Pell
5 Grant program and in at least 2 of the following federal
6 student aid programs:

7 (A) The Federal Work-Study program.

8 (B) The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan
9 Program.

10 (C) The Federal Supplemental Educational
11 Opportunity Grant Program.

12 "Qualified program" means a bachelor's degree or
13 certificate program that requires at least 60% of instruction
14 and coursework to be delivered and completed online.

15 "Tuition and mandatory fees" means the customary charge
16 for instruction and the additional fixed fees charged for
17 specified purposes that are required generally of nongrant
18 students for each academic period for which a grant recipient
19 enrolls. The Commission may adopt rules concerning the
20 computation of tuition and mandatory fees for the purposes of
21 this definition.

22 (b) The Commission shall establish the Adult Learner
23 Flexible Education Grant Program to facilitate access to
24 online postsecondary education for adults over the age of 25.

25 (c) Beginning with the 2026-2027 academic year, subject to
26 appropriation, the Commission shall receive and consider

1 applications for grant assistance under this Section. An
2 applicant is eligible for a grant under this Section if the
3 Commission finds that the applicant meets all of the following
4 qualifications:

5 (1) The applicant is over the age of 25.

6 (2) The applicant is accepted for enrollment at a
7 qualified institution to pursue a qualified program.

8 (3) The applicant is a resident of this State and a
9 permanent resident of the United States.

10 (4) The applicant has completed the Free Application
11 for Federal Student Aid.

12 (5) The applicant, in the absence of grant assistance,
13 will be deterred by financial considerations from
14 completing an educational program at the qualified
15 institution of the applicant's choice.

16 (6) The applicant has not already received a
17 baccalaureate degree.

18 (d) All grants under this Section are applicable only to
19 tuition and mandatory fees. The Commission shall determine the
20 grant amount for each student, which amount must not exceed
21 \$5,000. The total amount of a grant awarded by the Commission
22 under this Section to an individual in any given fiscal year,
23 when added to other financial assistance awarded to that
24 individual for that fiscal year, may not exceed the cost of
25 attendance at the qualified institution at which the
26 individual is enrolled.

1 (e) All applications for grants to be awarded under this
2 Section shall be made to the Commission in the form and manner
3 as prescribed by the Commission. The information required to
4 be set forth in the application shall be determined by the
5 Commission. The Commission shall require eligible applicants
6 to submit with their applications such supporting documents,
7 including financial documents, as the Commission deems
8 necessary.

9 (f) All grant funds distributed in accordance with this
10 Section shall be paid to the qualified institution on behalf
11 of the recipient. Grants are applicable toward 2 semesters or
12 equivalent academic terms of enrollment within an academic
13 year. Up to 3% of the appropriation for this program may be
14 used by the Commission for the costs of administering the
15 program. The Commission may establish a methodology for the
16 distribution of grants, prioritizing students as follows:

17 (1) Students who are ineligible for others forms of
18 State-based financial aid.

19 (2) Students who demonstrate the most financial need
20 based on the Student Aid Index of the Free Application for
21 Federal Student Aid form or any other methodology used by
22 the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form to
23 determine and prioritize student need.

24 (3) First-generation students.

25 (4) Students who meet any other criteria the
26 Commission deems necessary.

1 (g) The Commission shall adopt rules for the effective
2 implementation of this Section.

3 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1,
4 2026.