

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. This Act may be referred to as the College  
5 Affordability Act.

6 Section 5. The State Finance Act is amended by adding  
7 Sections 5.878, 5.879, 5.880, and 5.881 as follows:

8 (30 ILCS 105/5.878 new)

9 Sec. 5.878. The College Affordability Fund.

10 (30 ILCS 105/5.879 new)

11 Sec. 5.879. The Work-Study Fund.

12 (30 ILCS 105/5.880 new)

13 Sec. 5.880. The College Affordability Purchasing Fund.

14 (30 ILCS 105/5.881 new)

15 Sec. 5.881. The Illinois Excellence Fund.

16 Section 10. The Board of Higher Education Act is amended by  
17 adding Section 9.36 as follows:

1 (110 ILCS 205/9.36 new)

2 Sec. 9.36. Illinois Excellence Program.

3 (a) Subject to appropriation, the Board shall establish and  
4 administer a program, to be called the Illinois Excellence  
5 Program, to incentivize the recruitment and retention of  
6 promising faculty throughout the Illinois system of higher  
7 education through the award of faculty and department incentive  
8 grants.

9 The Program shall focus on personnel incentives designed to  
10 attract and retain sought-after faculty to the Illinois system  
11 of higher education.

12 (b) The Illinois Excellence Fund is created as a special  
13 fund in the State treasury. All money in the Fund may be used,  
14 subject to appropriation, by the Board of Higher Education for  
15 the administration of the Illinois Excellence Program.

16 Section 15. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is  
17 amended by adding Section 23 as follows:

18 (110 ILCS 947/23 new)

19 Sec. 23. College Affordability programs.

20 (a) In this Section:

21 "Continuous enrollment" means a student has attended  
22 classes in the fall and spring semester of a single academic  
23 year; enrollment in summer semester or intersession terms is  
24 not required.

1       "Public institution" means the University of Illinois,  
2       Southern Illinois University, Chicago State University,  
3       Eastern Illinois University, Governors State University,  
4       Illinois State University, Northeastern Illinois University,  
5       Northern Illinois University, Western Illinois University, any  
6       public community college in this State, or any other public  
7       university, college, or community college now or hereafter  
8       established or authorized by the General Assembly.

9       "Student aid" means scholarships and grants, other than a  
10       College Affordability grant, awarded to the student from any  
11       source that does not require repayment and half of a student's  
12       federally calculated expected family contribution; "student  
13       aid" does not include student loans and work-study awards.

14       (b) The Commission shall implement and administer a  
15       program, beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year, to award  
16       College Affordability grants to all eligible Illinois  
17       residents seeking an associate or bachelor's degree, as  
18       applicable, from a public institution. The following terms and  
19       conditions shall apply to the program:

20           (1) To be eligible for a grant, a student must (i) have  
21           been an Illinois resident for at least 2 years immediately  
22           prior to applying for a grant, (ii) have graduated from an  
23           approved high school with a cumulative grade point average  
24           of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (or its equivalent, as  
25           determined by the Commission), (iii) have an annual family  
26           income of \$125,000 or less, and (iv) be admitted to and

1 enrolled full-time, as an Illinois resident, in a public  
2 institution in the fall term after graduating from high  
3 school. Exceptions to initial enrollment may be made for  
4 extenuating circumstances as provided in rules adopted by  
5 the Commission.

6 (2) Students applying for a grant shall complete the  
7 College Affordability grant application in their initial  
8 semester of enrollment. Students shall complete the Free  
9 Application for Federal Student Aid each academic year in  
10 which they seek to receive a grant.

11 (3) To continue to receive a grant, a student must  
12 maintain Illinois residency, as well as a cumulative grade  
13 point average of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (or its  
14 equivalent, as determined by the Commission).

15 (4) Each academic year, subject to money appropriated  
16 by the General Assembly from the College Affordability  
17 Fund, a grant shall be equal to the cost of tuition and  
18 mandatory fees at the public institution attended less all  
19 other student aid, as determined by the Commission. For the  
20 2018-2019 academic year, if grants are awarded under this  
21 Section, the total amount of institutional aid awarded  
22 directly by a public institution to its students in the  
23 form of scholarships, grants, and waivers must be no less  
24 than the total amount of such institutional aid awarded by  
25 that public institution for the 2017-2018 academic year.  
26 For the 2019-2020 academic year and each academic year

1 thereafter for which grants are awarded under this Section,  
2 the total amount of institutional aid that must be awarded  
3 under this paragraph (4) shall be adjusted for inflation as  
4 determined by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban  
5 Consumers as determined by the United States Department of  
6 Labor. Student aid shall be credited first to the student's  
7 tuition and mandatory fees. The amount of the grant may be  
8 based on the annual family income of the student, as  
9 determined by the Commission, but in no event may a grant  
10 exceed \$4,000. Each public institution shall annually  
11 report its undergraduate tuition rate for Illinois  
12 residents and the number of its undergraduates who are  
13 Illinois residents to the Commission.

14 (5) A student awarded a grant who has an approved  
15 medical or personal leave of absence from a public  
16 institution may continue to receive the grant upon resuming  
17 the student's education at the public institution so long  
18 as the student continues to meet all applicable eligibility  
19 requirements under this Section and as adopted by the  
20 Commission. The total of all approved leaves of absence may  
21 not exceed 6 months.

22 (6) A student is eligible for a grant until the  
23 occurrence of the first of the following events:

24 (A) the student has earned a bachelor's degree; or

25 (B) the sum of the number of years the student has  
26 attended a public institution equals 6 years from the

1 date of the student's initial enrollment at a public  
2 institution, exclusive of approved leaves of absence,  
3 except that no more than 3 of those years may be for  
4 attendance at a public community college.

5 (7) Except for a medical or personal leave of absence,  
6 as approved by a public institution, a student awarded a  
7 grant under this Section shall maintain continuous  
8 enrollment at a public institution.

9 (8) A student awarded a grant under this Section shall  
10 participate in a student loan counseling program through  
11 the Commission. This program may be completed online.

12 (c) In awarding grants under this Section, the Commission  
13 shall, by rule, develop the selection and renewal criteria for  
14 students.

15 (d) Prior to receiving grant assistance for any academic  
16 year, each recipient of a grant awarded under this Section  
17 shall be required by the Commission to sign an agreement under  
18 which the recipient pledges that, beginning within the one-year  
19 period following the termination of the academic program for  
20 which the recipient was awarded a grant, the recipient shall  
21 reside in this State for a period of not less than 2 years. If  
22 the recipient is 26 years old or younger, his or her parent or  
23 guardian must also sign the agreement, agreeing to repay any  
24 amounts that the recipient does not repay under subsection (e)  
25 of this Section. Each recipient shall, upon request of the  
26 Commission, provide the Commission with evidence that he or she

1 is fulfilling or has fulfilled the terms of the agreement  
2 provided for in this subsection (d).

3 (e) If a recipient of a grant awarded under this Section  
4 fails to fulfill the residency obligation set forth in  
5 subsection (d) of this Section, the Commission shall require  
6 the recipient to repay, without interest, the amount of the  
7 grants received, prorated according to the fraction of the  
8 obligation not completed, and, if applicable, reasonable  
9 collection fees. The Commission shall allow the recipient to  
10 repay one-tenth of the amount owed each year for 10 years. The  
11 Commission is authorized to establish rules relating to its  
12 collection activities for repayment of grants under this  
13 Section.

14 (f) A recipient of a grant awarded by the Commission under  
15 this Section is not in violation of the agreement entered into  
16 pursuant to subsection (d) of this Section if the recipient (i)  
17 is serving as a member of the armed services of the United  
18 States; (ii) is enrolled in a graduate program following  
19 graduation from a public university; (iii) is temporarily  
20 totally disabled, as established by sworn affidavit of a  
21 qualified physician; or (iv) cannot fulfill the residency  
22 obligation due to his or her death, disability, or  
23 incompetency, as established by sworn affidavit of a qualified  
24 physician. No claim for repayment may be filed against the  
25 estate of such a decedent or incompetent. Any extension of the  
26 period during which the residency requirement must be fulfilled

1 is subject to limitations of duration as established by the  
2 Commission.

3 (g) The College Affordability Fund is created as a special  
4 fund in the State treasury. The Fund shall consist of money  
5 appropriated by the General Assembly and any gifts, bequests,  
6 or donations made to the Fund. All money in the Fund shall only  
7 be used, subject to appropriation, by the Commission for the  
8 purposes of awarding grants under this Section.

9 (h) Subject to appropriation from the Work-Study Fund, the  
10 Commission shall implement and administer a program in which  
11 the Commission shall award work-study stipends to applicants  
12 who are recipients of grants under this Section and who agree  
13 to work for 5 to 15 hours per week as peer mentors or tutors for  
14 other grant recipients under this Section under a work-study  
15 program established by the public institution. Eligibility for  
16 a stipend shall be based on the applicant's merit and the  
17 amount appropriated in a given fiscal year. The Commission  
18 shall establish an annual deadline for applying for a stipend.

19 The Work-Study Fund is created as a special fund in the  
20 State treasury. All money in the Fund shall be used, subject to  
21 appropriation, by the Commission for the purposes of this  
22 subsection (h).

23 (i) Subject to appropriation from the College  
24 Affordability Purchasing Fund, the Commission shall implement  
25 and administer a program in which the Commission shall buy out  
26 the private student loans of any eligible participant that the



1 eligible participant incurred to attend a public institution.  
2 The Commission may establish its own separate repayment  
3 conditions, but the Commission must set a 0% interest rate on  
4 any loans it buys out. In order to be eligible to participate  
5 in the program established under this subsection (i), the  
6 participant (1) must have graduated from a public institution  
7 before the start of the 2018-2019 academic year with a  
8 cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale  
9 (or its equivalent, as determined by the Commission) and (2)  
10 must be currently repaying any federal student loans incurred  
11 to attend a public institution on an income-based repayment  
12 plan.

13 The College Affordability Purchasing Fund is created as a  
14 special fund in the State treasury. All money in the Fund shall  
15 be used, subject to appropriation, by the Commission for the  
16 purposes of this subsection (i).

17 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1,  
18 2018, except that Section 15 and this Section take effect upon  
19 becoming law.