

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  
5 Relieve College Costs Pilot Program Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly makes all of the  
7 following findings:

8 (1) A college degree involving a substantive and  
9 rigorous curriculum that is designed to challenge the  
10 mind, enhance knowledge and skills, provide a core,  
11 canonical knowledge base, expose students to great  
12 literature and writing, and prepare a student for success  
13 as a future citizen can be a valuable asset to residents of  
14 this State.

15 (2) Public community colleges and universities offer  
16 multiple existing courses of study pertaining to  
17 fundamental topics that have historically served as the  
18 foundation for degrees in the humanities, including art,  
19 philosophy, logic and rhetoric, history, literature, world  
20 religions, world languages, and studies of civilizations  
21 from antiquity, that, in turn, have served as the basis  
22 for intellectual thought and development for generations.  
23 These may be classified as high impact courses.

1           (3) In view of COVID-19, many institutions of higher  
2 learning have cultivated courses that can be delivered  
3 through online instruction.

4           (4) Many State residents will experience disruptions  
5 or economic hardships when seeking a college degree.

6           (5) It is in the interests of State residents to  
7 identify affordable pathways to secure a college degree.

8           (6) It is in the interests of State residents to have  
9 an accredited 4-year college degree pathway based on  
10 high-impact courses that costs less than \$20,000 for the  
11 entirety of the degree pathway.

12           (7) It is also in the interests of State residents to  
13 employ, if possible, a degree pathway based on educational  
14 resources that reside in the public domain or which have  
15 been released under an intellectual property license that  
16 allows for free use, reuse, modification, and sharing with  
17 others, including full courses, course materials, modules,  
18 textbooks, streaming videos, tests, software, and any  
19 other tools, materials, or techniques used to support  
20 access to knowledge. Many foundational materials and  
21 original sources used in high impact courses are  
22 particularly likely to fall into these categories.

23           Section 10. Creation of a 4-year degree pathway. A pilot  
24 program is created for a 4-year degree pathway, which shall  
25 comply with the standards of the Higher Learning Commission,

1 based on texts that served as the core foundational basis for  
2 western civilization and the Enlightenment. The degree pathway  
3 may not exceed \$20,000 for the full degree program. This  
4 pathway may be referred to as the Fundamental Issues and Texts  
5 Humanities Degree.

6 Section 15. Relieve College Costs Pilot Program.

7 (a) Subject to appropriation, beginning with the 2021-2022  
8 academic year or, if funds are not appropriated for the  
9 program that academic year, beginning with the academic year  
10 in which funds are appropriated for the program, the State  
11 Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board, and  
12 Board of Higher Education shall coordinate with each other to  
13 assign a qualified individual to serve as a program director  
14 to develop the curriculum for the 4-year degree pathway  
15 created in Section 10.

16 If a source of outside funding for the program director is  
17 secured to support the development of the program, the State  
18 Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board, and  
19 Board of Higher Education shall facilitate the approval of the  
20 Fundamental Issues and Texts Humanities Degree curriculum  
21 pathway for the public institutions agreeing to participate in  
22 the pilot program.

23 (b) Under the program, one public high school, one public  
24 community college, and one public university in this State  
25 shall be chosen to develop a competency-based baccalaureate

1 degree program for the Fundamental Issues and Texts Humanities  
2 Degree. The goals of the program must include all of the  
3 following:

4 (1) To prepare students who complete the program with  
5 the requisite skills relating to critical thinking,  
6 problem solving, rational inquiry, and oral and written  
7 communication needed for employment or further graduate  
8 study.

9 (2) To use open educational resources if available.

10 (3) To use online course options if available to  
11 reduce costs.

12 (4) To identify pathway courses that can be used to  
13 promote dual credit course enrollment in the participating  
14 high school.

15 (5) To have a \$20,000 maximum tuition rate for the  
16 entirety of the degree pathway.

17 (c) The curriculum of the pilot program must include  
18 course instruction on the canonical texts that served as the  
19 foundations for western civilization and the Enlightenment in  
20 areas that shall include, but are not limited to, philosophy,  
21 literature, history, religion, government and politics, art,  
22 and architecture. The program must allow for 2 courses of  
23 instruction on global areas outside of western civilization in  
24 areas that include, but are not limited to, philosophy,  
25 literature, history, religion, government and politics, art,  
26 and architecture.

1           (d) The program director shall prioritize for the pilot  
2 program community colleges and public universities that have  
3 existing articulation agreements. The program director shall  
4 attempt to craft a degree pathway that can be satisfied by  
5 existing core courses that are commonly offered at multiple  
6 institutions of higher education in this State.

7           Section 20. Open educational resources adoption  
8 incentives.

9           (a) The State Board of Education, Illinois Community  
10 College Board, and Board of Higher Education shall create a  
11 panel comprised of all of the following members, who shall  
12 serve without compensation:

13           (1) Eight persons from institutions of higher  
14 education located in this State appointed by the Executive  
15 Director of the Board of Higher Education, including at  
16 least 2 representatives from a university, one  
17 representative from a community college in Cook County,  
18 one representative from a community college with a  
19 district boundary that includes some portion of DuPage,  
20 Kane, Lake, McHenry, or Will County, one representative  
21 from a community college in downstate Illinois, and one  
22 representative from a nonpublic university that has  
23 participated in articulation agreements with a community  
24 college.

25           (2) Two persons each from a high school located in

1 this State that offers dual credit programs, preferably  
2 from geographically diverse regions, appointed by the  
3 State Superintendent Education.

4 (3) A person from the State Board of Education  
5 appointed by the State Board of Education, a person from  
6 the Illinois Community College Board appointed by the  
7 Illinois Community College Board, and a person from the  
8 Board of Higher Education appointed by the Board of Higher  
9 Education.

10 (4) Two members appointed by the Governor.

11 (5) One member of the House of Representative  
12 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
13 one member of the House of Representatives appointed by  
14 the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, one  
15 member of the Senate appointed by the President of the  
16 Senate, and one member of the Senate appointed by the  
17 Minority Leader of the Senate.

18 Appointments under paragraphs (1) and (2) of this  
19 subsection (a) shall include at least 4 faculty members, a  
20 library professional, an instructional design expert, and 2  
21 academic administrators.

22 The Board of Higher Education shall provide administrative  
23 and other support to the panel.

24 The Executive Director of the Board of Higher Education  
25 shall convene the first meeting of the panel no later than  
26 September 1, 2021.

1           The panel shall seek to identify initiatives to support  
2 the use of foundational materials and original sources that  
3 reside in the public domain or open educational resource  
4 materials in support of the degree program set forth in  
5 Section 10 and to make recommendations to the General Assembly  
6 no later than December 31, 2022. The panel is dissolved on  
7 January 31, 2023.

8           (b) Each campus of a public university or public community  
9 college district shall, upon request of its board of trustees,  
10 do both of the following:

11                 (1) Clearly highlight, by means that may include a  
12 symbol or logo in a conspicuous place on the online campus  
13 course schedule, the courses that exclusively use digital  
14 course materials that are free of charge to students or  
15 low-cost digital or print options for students.

16                 (2) Ensure that the materials comply with the federal  
17 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the federal  
18 Copyright Act of 1976.

19           (c) Subject to appropriation or third-party funding, the  
20 Illinois Community College Board shall establish and  
21 administer a grant program to encourage faculty at  
22 institutions of higher education to adopt, modify, redesign,  
23 or develop courses that use only open educational resources in  
24 support of the degree program set forth in Section 10.

25           Any individual who receives a grant under this subsection

26           (c) shall ensure that any open educational resources used in a

1 course is provided to a student enrolled in the course at no  
2 cost other than the cost of printing.

3 A faculty member who receives a grant under this  
4 subsection (c) must submit to the Illinois Community College  
5 Board for each of the 4 semesters immediately following the  
6 implementation of the course a report that includes:

7 (1) the number of students who have completed the  
8 course;

9 (2) an estimate of the amount of money saved by a  
10 student due to the use of open educational resources in  
11 the course;

12 (3) the number of faculty members, if any, who adopted  
13 the course curriculum; and

14 (4) any other information required as a condition of  
15 the grant.

16 Section 25. Reporting.

17 (a) After the first cohort of students complete the pilot  
18 program under Section 10, the State Board of Education,  
19 Illinois Community College Board, and Board of Higher  
20 Education must submit a report to the Governor and General  
21 Assembly detailing the impact of the pilot program on all of  
22 the following:

23 (1) Reducing the costs of attending an institution of  
24 higher learning and overall student loan debt.

25 (2) Elevating the importance of coursework in the



1 classical liberal arts.

2 (3) Creating a model curriculum that can be replicated  
3 through partnerships between other institutions of higher  
4 learning and school districts across this State.

5 (b) This Act is inoperative on and after the State Board of  
6 Education, Illinois Community College Board, and Board of  
7 Higher Education submit the report required under subsection  
8 (a).

9 Section 90. Rules. The Illinois Community College Board,  
10 in consultation with the State Board of Education and the  
11 Board of Higher Education, must adopt rules to implement this  
12 Act.

13 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
14 becoming law.