

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 Child
5 Welfare Student Loan Forgiveness Act.

6 Section 5. Purpose. The purpose of this Act is to attract
7 capable and promising students to the child welfare profession,
8 increase employment and retention of individuals who are
9 working towards or who have received either a bachelor's degree
10 or a master's degree in social work or any human services
11 subject area that qualifies the individual for employment as a
12 family services worker, and provide opportunities for persons
13 making mid-career decisions to enter the child welfare
14 profession.

15 Section 10. Definitions. In this Act:

16 "Commission" means the Illinois Student Assistance
17 Commission.

18 "Contracting agency" means an agency that the Department of
19 Children and Family Services contracts with for the provision
20 of child protective services.

21 "Forgivable loan" means a higher education student loan
22 that a person has incurred in attending a social work program
23 approved by the Council on Social Work Education or an
24 accredited human services degree program.

25 Section 15. Establishment of program. There is created the
26 Child Welfare Student Loan Forgiveness Program to be
27 administered by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.
28 The program shall provide loan assistance, subject to
29 appropriation, to eligible students for upper-division
30 undergraduate and graduate study. The Commission shall adopt

1 rules necessary to administer the program.

2 Section 20. Maximum loan time period; maximum loan amount.

3 (a) Subject to appropriation, an undergraduate forgivable
4 loan may be awarded for a maximum of 2 academic years. The
5 amount of this loan shall not exceed \$4,000 per year.

6 (b) Subject to appropriation, a graduate forgivable loan
7 may be awarded for a maximum of 2 academic years. The amount of
8 this loan shall not exceed \$8,000 per year.

9 Section 25. Eligibility.

10 (a) To be eligible for assistance under the Child Welfare
11 Student Loan Forgiveness Program, an applicant for an
12 undergraduate forgivable loan must meet all of the following
13 qualifications:

14 (1) Be a full-time student at the upper-division
15 undergraduate level in a social work program approved by
16 the Council on Social Work Education leading to a
17 bachelor's degree in social work or an accredited human
18 services degree program.

19 (2) Have declared an intent to work in child welfare at
20 the Department of Children and Family Services, its
21 successor, or a contracting agency for at least the number
22 of years for which a forgivable loan is received.

23 (3) Have maintained a minimum cumulative grade point
24 average of at least a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale for all
25 undergraduate work. If applying for renewal of an
26 undergraduate forgivable loan, an applicant must have
27 maintained a minimum cumulative grade point average of at
28 least a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale for all undergraduate work and
29 have earned at least 12 semester credits per term, or the
30 equivalent.

31 (b) To be eligible for assistance under the Child Welfare
32 Student Loan Forgiveness Program, an applicant for a graduate
33 forgivable loan must meet all of the following qualifications:

34 (1) Be a full-time student at the graduate level in a

1 social work program approved by the Council on Social Work
2 Education leading to a master's degree in social work or an
3 accredited human services degree program.

4 (2) Have declared an intent to work in child welfare at
5 the Department of Children and Family Services, its
6 successor, or a contracting agency for at least the number
7 of years for which a forgivable loan is received.

8 (3) Hold a bachelor's degree from a school or
9 department of social work at any college or university
10 accredited by the Council on Social Work Education, or hold
11 a degree in a human services field from an accredited
12 college or university.

13 (4) Have maintained an undergraduate cumulative grade
14 point average of at least a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or have
15 attained a Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score of at
16 least 1,000. If applying for renewal of a graduate
17 forgivable loan, an applicant must have maintained a
18 minimum cumulative grade point average of at least a 3.0 on
19 a 4.0 scale for all graduate work and have earned at least
20 9 semester credits per term, or the equivalent.

21 (5) Not have received an undergraduate forgivable loan
22 under the program.

23 Section 30. Repayment schedule; credit; penalty for
24 non-compliance.

25 (a) A forgivable loan must be repaid within 10 years after
26 completion of the approved or accredited social work or human
27 services program. The Commission shall adopt, by rule,
28 repayment schedules and applicable interest rates.

29 (b) Credit for repayment of a forgivable loan shall be in
30 an amount not to exceed \$4,000 in loan principal plus
31 applicable accrued interest for each full year of eligible
32 service in the child welfare profession. Forgivable loan
33 recipients may receive loan repayment credit for child welfare
34 service rendered at any time during the scheduled repayment
35 period. However, such repayment credit shall be applicable only

1 to the current principal and accrued interest balance that
2 remains at the time the repayment credit is earned. No loan
3 recipient shall be reimbursed for previous cash payments of
4 principal and interest.

5 (c) Any forgivable loan recipient who fails to work at the
6 Department of Children and Family Services, its successor, or a
7 contracting agency, as required under the terms of the loan, is
8 responsible for repaying the loan plus accrued interest at 8%
9 annually.