

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,  
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Retention of Illinois Students and Equity Act.

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

(1) The State of Illinois is committed to ensuring that all students who are residents of this State have meaningful and equitable access to higher educational opportunities notwithstanding the student's race, color, gender or gender identity, age, ancestry, marital status, military status, religion, pregnancy, national origin, disability status, sexual orientation, order of protection status, as defined under Section 1-103 of the Illinois Human Rights Act, or immigration status.

(2) The State of Illinois is committed to ensuring that students who may not have had the same educational opportunities are not penalized as they seek to achieve higher education.

(3) The State of Illinois is committed to ensuring the success and retention of African American students by safeguarding equitable access to educational funding and

eliminating systemic barriers.

(4) Lifting any caps on the Monetary Award Program, other than those required by State law, will have a positive impact on the retention and equity of African American students and other students of color who are disproportionately impacted by the lack of access to resources in completing their postsecondary education.

(5) The State of Illinois is committed to retaining Illinois students who wish to attend institutions of higher learning in this State by addressing financial barriers for those students.

Section 10. Definition. In this Act, "Illinois resident" includes any person who is deemed an Illinois resident for tuition purposes under State law.

Section 15. Equitable eligibility for financial aid and benefits.

(a) A student who is an Illinois resident and who is not otherwise eligible for federal financial aid, including, but not limited to, a transgender student who is disqualified for failure to register for selective service or a noncitizen student who has not obtained lawful permanent residence, shall be eligible for State financial aid and benefits as described in subsection (b).

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the

contrary, a student who is an Illinois resident (i) is eligible to apply or receive consideration for any student aid or benefit funded or administered by the State, any State agency, or any public institution of higher learning, including, but not limited to, scholarships, grants, awards, stipends, room and board assistance, tuition waivers, or other financial or in-kind assistance and (ii) to ensure equity, success, and the retention of Illinois residents, may not be subject to any caps on grant assistance available under the Monetary Award Program other than those required by State law.

(c) The eligibility requirements under this Section for any student aid or benefit funded or administered by the State shall be interpreted to promote the broadest eligibility for students who are Illinois residents in accordance with State law or policy.

(d) Nothing in this Section shall be construed as modifying any eligibility requirements regarding academic standing or personal or household income for any State financial aid program.

(e) The General Assembly finds and declares that this Section is a State law within the meaning of subsection (d) of Section 1621 of Title 8 of the United States Code.

Section 97. Severability. The provisions of this Act are severable under Section 1.31 of the Statute on Statutes.