



## 103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

SB1453

Introduced 2/7/2023, by Sen. Javier L. Cervantes

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act  
30 ILCS 105/5.990 new

Creates the Graduate and Retain Our Workforce Act. Establishes the GROW Illinois Program, in which public institutions of higher education award incentive loans to applicants. Provides that, subject to appropriation, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission may, each year, administer applications for assistance under the GROW Illinois Program. Sets forth qualifications for recipients, degrees, and jobs. Provides for loan repayment and rulemaking. Amends the State Finance Act to create the Graduate and Retain Our Workforce (GROW) Illinois Fund as a special fund in the State treasury. Effective immediately.

LRB103 27551 RJT 53926 b

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 Graduate and Retain Our Workforce Act.

6 Section 5. Purpose. In order to encourage academically  
7 talented students who are residents of this State to enter the  
8 workforce in this State upon graduating from degree programs  
9 in high-demand fields of study, while also combating this  
10 State's ever worsening problem of outbound migration of high  
11 school students, this Act establishes the Graduate and Retain  
12 Our Workforce (GROW) Illinois Program.

13 Section 10. Definitions. As used in this Act:

14 "Commission" means the Illinois Student Assistance  
15 Commission.

16 "Full-time" means the number of credit hours the  
17 Commission determines is full-time enrollment for a student  
18 for purposes of the program.

19 "Program" means the GROW Illinois Program created by this  
20 Act.

21 "Qualifying degree" means an associate or a bachelor's  
22 degree granted by a qualifying public institution that

1 qualifies an individual to work in a qualifying job, as  
2 determined by the Commission.

3 "Qualifying job" means a job selected by the Commission  
4 pursuant to Section 20 of this Act (i) for which a recipient of  
5 an award under this Act is pursuing a qualifying degree, (ii)  
6 for which the recipient has completed a qualifying degree, or  
7 (iii) in which the recipient is working.

8 "Qualifying public institution" means a public institution  
9 of higher education located in this State.

10 "Recipient" means a State resident enrolled in a  
11 qualifying public institution who receives an award under this  
12 Act.

13 Section 15. GROW Illinois Program.

14 (a) There is established the Graduate and Retain Our  
15 Workforce (GROW) Illinois Program to recruit and train  
16 individuals to work in certain jobs that have a high demand for  
17 new employees and offer high wages by awarding forgivable  
18 incentive loans.

19 (b) Subject to appropriation, the Commission may, each  
20 year, administer applications for assistance under this Act.

21 (c) Subject to available funds, a qualifying public  
22 institution shall award an incentive loan to an individual  
23 who:

24 (1) is enrolled full time in the qualifying public  
25 institution;

1 (2) has completed at least:

2 (A) one semester of full-time equivalent course  
3 work if the individual is pursuing an associate  
4 degree; or

5 (B) 2 semesters of full-time equivalent course  
6 work if the individual is pursuing a bachelor's  
7 degree;

8 (3) is pursuing or declares an intent to pursue a  
9 qualifying degree;

10 (4) declares an intent to work, which may be fulfilled  
11 by completing and signing an application created by the  
12 Commission pursuant to Section 30 of this Act, in a  
13 qualifying job in this State following graduation;

14 (5) applies, via an application created by the  
15 Commission pursuant to Section 30 of this Act, to the  
16 qualifying public institution to receive an incentive  
17 loan; and

18 (6) meets other criteria determined by the Commission  
19 by rule under Section 30 of this Act.

20 (d) A qualifying public institution may do any of the  
21 following:

22 (1) Award an incentive loan to a recipient in an  
23 amount up to the cost of resident tuition, fees, and books  
24 for the number of credit hours in which the recipient is  
25 enrolled each semester.

26 (2) Award an incentive loan to a recipient for up to

1 the expected amount of time for the recipient to complete  
2 a qualifying degree, as determined by the institution.

3 (3) Cancel an incentive loan in accordance with rules  
4 adopted by the Commission under Section 30 of this Act.

5 (e) A qualifying public institution may use money from a  
6 partnership with an industry or business for funding or  
7 repaying an incentive loan.

8 (f) Each fiscal year, the Commission may use up to 5% of  
9 money appropriated for the program for administration.

10 Section 20. Selection of qualifying jobs and qualifying  
11 degrees.

12 (a) Subject to appropriation, for the 2023-2024 academic  
13 year or for the first academic year for which the General  
14 Assembly appropriates funds for the program, whichever occurs  
15 first, the following eligible majors shall be considered for  
16 the program:

17 (1) computer and information sciences;

18 (2) information technology;

19 (3) information science;

20 (4) computer science;

21 (5) computer systems networking and  
22 telecommunications;

23 (6) computer and information systems  
24 security/information assurance;

25 (7) management information systems; and

1           (8) any other similarly designed college majors as  
2           determined acceptable by the Commission.

3           (b) Subject to appropriation, starting with either the  
4           2024-2025 academic year or the academic year following the  
5           first academic year for which the General Assembly  
6           appropriates funds for the program, and every 2 academic years  
7           thereafter, the Commission shall select 5 qualifying jobs that  
8           have the highest demand for new employees and offer high wages  
9           and select the qualifying degrees required for each of those  
10          qualifying jobs.

11          (c) The Commission shall ensure that each qualifying job  
12          selected ranks in the top 40% of jobs based on an employment  
13          index that considers the job's growth rate and total openings,  
14          ranks in the top 40% of jobs for wages, and requires an  
15          associate degree or a bachelor's degree. The Commission shall  
16          publish and make available to the public an annual report  
17          covering the selection of the 5 qualifying jobs and their  
18          qualifying degrees.

19          (d) For purposes of administering this Section, the  
20          Commission may consult with the Illinois Community College  
21          Board, the Board of Higher Education, the Department of  
22          Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Department of  
23          Employment Security, or any other State agency deemed  
24          necessary by the Commission.

25          Section 25. Repayment of an incentive loan.

1           (a) For each year that a recipient works in a qualifying  
2 job in this State following completion of a qualifying degree,  
3 the qualifying public institution that awarded the incentive  
4 loan shall waive repayment of the amount of one year of the  
5 recipient's incentive loan. Except as provided in subsection  
6 (b), a qualifying public institution may not require a  
7 recipient to repay an incentive loan.

8           (b) Repayment of an incentive loan may be required as  
9 follows:

10           (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this  
11 subsection (b), a qualifying public institution shall  
12 require a recipient to repay to the qualifying public  
13 institution:

14           (A) the full amount of an incentive loan if the  
15 recipient fails to either graduate with a qualifying  
16 degree within 6 years after initially receiving the  
17 incentive loan or work in a qualifying job in this  
18 State within one year after completing a qualifying  
19 degree; or

20           (B) the outstanding amount of an incentive loan if  
21 the recipient works in a qualifying job for fewer  
22 years than the number of years required to waive  
23 repayment of the full incentive loan.

24           (2) A qualifying public institution may waive or delay  
25 a repayment described in paragraph (1) of this subsection  
26 (b) in accordance with rules adopted by the Commission

1 under Section 30 of this Act.

2 (d) A qualifying public institution may require  
3 appropriate interest with the repayment of an incentive loan.

4 (e) A qualifying public institution shall use all  
5 repayments received under this Section for the program.

6 Section 30. Rulemaking. The Commission has the power to  
7 adopt rules necessary for the implementation of this Act,  
8 including, but not limited to, rules:

9 (1) establishing an application process for an  
10 individual to apply for an incentive loan;

11 (2) subject to Section 15 of this Act, establishing  
12 qualifying criteria for an individual to receive an  
13 incentive loan;

14 (3) establishing how State funding available for  
15 incentive loans is distributed among qualifying public  
16 institutions;

17 (4) establishing how to determine the amount of an  
18 incentive loan;

19 (5) establishing the circumstances under which a  
20 qualifying public institution may either cancel an  
21 incentive loan or waive or delay repayment of an incentive  
22 loan; and

23 (6) establishing a methodology for prioritizing  
24 applications from applicants who demonstrate a financial  
25 need or hardship and applications from applicants



1 demonstrating academic excellence.

2 Section 35. Graduate and Retain Our Workforce (GROW)  
3 Illinois Fund. The Graduate and Retain Our Workforce (GROW)  
4 Illinois Fund is created as a special fund in the State  
5 treasury. Money from institutional, organizational, or other  
6 private entities shall be deposited into the Fund. All money  
7 in the Fund shall be used, subject to appropriation, by the  
8 Commission to implement and administer the program pursuant to  
9 this Act.

10 Section 90. The State Finance Act is amended by adding  
11 Section 5.990 as follows:

12 (30 ILCS 105/5.990 new)

13 Sec. 5.990. The Graduate and Retain Our Workforce (GROW)  
14 Illinois Fund.

15 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
16 becoming law.