



AIM HIGH Modifications in HB2170

AIM HIGH was created by Public Act 100-1015, with the intention of:

1. Increasing enrollment at public four-year universities in Illinois by providing universities funding for a new merit-based scholarship,
2. Particularly encouraging college attendance by students who may otherwise not enroll in college or attend a college outside of Illinois,
3. Using best efforts to provide the scholarship to a broader range of students.

Institutional Matching Requirement Means Fewer Scholarships for Under-Resourced Students

AIM HIGH scholarships have allowed public universities to expand their scholarship offering to students. However, the requirement that institutions fully match the state’s investment adds financial stress on low-resource institutions, which are also the institutions serving high numbers of lower-income students. Chicago State University (CSU) has been forced to return funds. The result is that students are losing out on educational support because the institution they choose to attend is financially challenged.

CSU cannot fully meet the matching requirement particularly due to the financial pressures created by COVID-19 and the financial stress it has placed on low-income students. Otherwise deserving students are denied access to financial support and schools like CSU are forced to turn away state funding for scholarships. At the same time, CSU students who made the hard choice not to return to school this fall reported that financial challenges were the top reason they could not continue their studies.

Further, all institutions have significant financial stress due to the pandemic. Institutions have invested in campus facilities, student resources (e.g. laptops and emergency grants), and e-learning infrastructure. Institutions also have lost revenue from canceled events, returning academic fees, and more. This measure provides relief to institutions without requiring new spending.

Legislative Recommendation: Reduce the Matching Requirement

The purpose of AIM HIGH is increasing enrollment in Illinois’ public universities. AIM HIGH cannot achieve its purpose unless all public institutions can fully leverage it.

Tiered Matching Requirement	Estimated Institutional Alignment*
Tier One: Institutions with 49% or more of students who are Pell Grant eligible must match at least 20% of the AIM HIGH allotment	CSU, GSU, NEIU, NIU, UIC, WIU,
Tier Two: Institutions with less than 49% of their students who are Pell Grant eligible must match at least 60% of their AIM HIGH allotment	EIU, ISU, NIU, SIUC, SIUE, UIS, UIUC

*Estimate based on one-year data on Pell Grant recipients from Fall 2020, rather than a three-year average on Pell Grant eligible students as proposed in HB 2170.