



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB3551

Introduced 2/18/2025, by Rep. Michael Crawford

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

110 ILCS 947/65.135 new

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. Provides that the Illinois Student Assistance Commission shall establish the Adult Learner Flexible Education Grant Program to facilitate access to online postsecondary education provided by a qualified institution of higher learning, including a not-for-profit postsecondary institution that offers classes exclusively online and meets other criteria, for adults over the age of 25 pursuing careers in fields facing workforce shortages, as determined by the Commission. Provides that, beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year, subject to appropriation, the Commission shall receive and consider applications for grant assistance. Provides that an applicant is eligible for a grant if the Commission finds that the applicant meets specified criteria. Provides that all grants are applicable only to tuition and mandatory fees. Provides that the Commission shall determine the grant amount for each student, which amount must not exceed \$5,000. Sets forth provisions concerning conditions on the grant amount, grant applications, the distribution of grant funds, and rulemaking. Effective July 1, 2025.

LRB104 11479 LNS 21568 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 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is
5 amended by adding Section 65.135 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/65.135 new)

7 Sec. 65.135. Adult Learner Flexible Education Grant
8 Program.

9 (a) In this Section:

10 "Qualified institution" means either a qualified
11 institution as defined in Section 10 of this Act or a
12 not-for-profit postsecondary institution that is accredited by
13 a regional accrediting organization recognized by the Board of
14 Higher Education or the United States Department of Education
15 and that meets all of the following criteria:

16 (1) The institution was originally chartered and is
17 currently operating as a not-for-profit entity.

18 (2) The institution offers classes exclusively online.

19 (3) The institution's 3-year federal student loan
20 cohort default rate, as published by the United States
21 Department of Education, does not exceed 10%.

22 (4) The institution has at least 100,000 enrolled
23 full-time students.

1 (5) The institution's 3-year average cost of tuition
2 and mandatory fees is less than the 3-year average cost of
3 tuition and mandatory fees at public universities in this
4 State, based on data published by the United States
5 Department of Education.

6 (6) The institution participates in the Federal Pell
7 Grant Program and in at least 2 of the following federal
8 student aid programs:

9 (A) The Federal Work-Study Program.

10 (B) The William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan
11 Program.

12 (C) The Federal Supplemental Educational
13 Opportunity Grant Program.

14 "Tuition and mandatory fees" means the customary charge
15 for instruction and the additional fixed fees charged for
16 specified purposes that are required generally of nongrant
17 students for each academic period for which a grant recipient
18 enrolls. The Commission may adopt rules concerning the
19 computation of tuition and mandatory fees for the purposes of
20 this definition.

21 (b) The Commission shall establish the Adult Learner
22 Flexible Education Grant Program to facilitate access to
23 online postsecondary education for adults over the age of 25
24 pursuing careers in fields facing workforce shortages, as
25 determined by the Commission.

26 (c) Beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year, subject to

1 appropriation, the Commission shall receive and consider
2 applications for grant assistance under this Section. An
3 applicant is eligible for a grant under this Section if the
4 Commission finds that the applicant meets all of the following
5 qualifications:

6 (1) The applicant is over the age of 25.

7 (2) The applicant is pursuing a fully online degree or
8 certificate in a field with a demonstrated workforce
9 shortage, as determined by the Commission.

10 (3) The applicant is a resident of this State and a
11 permanent resident of the United States.

12 (4) The applicant is enrolled or accepted for
13 enrollment at a qualified institution.

14 (5) The applicant has completed the Free Application
15 for Federal Student Aid.

16 (6) The applicant can identify the specific
17 certificate, credential, or degree that he or she is
18 seeking to obtain.

19 (7) The applicant, in the absence of grant assistance,
20 will be deterred by financial considerations from
21 completing an educational program at the qualified
22 institution of the applicant's choice.

23 (8) The applicant has not already received a
24 baccalaureate degree.

25 (d) All grants under this Section are applicable only to
26 tuition and mandatory fees. The Commission shall determine the

1 grant amount for each student, which amount must not exceed
2 \$5,000. The total amount of a grant awarded by the Commission
3 under this Section to an individual in any given fiscal year,
4 when added to other financial assistance awarded to that
5 individual for that fiscal year, may not exceed the cost of
6 attendance at the qualified institution at which the
7 individual is enrolled.

8 (e) All applications for grants to be awarded under this
9 Section shall be made to the Commission in a form as set forth
10 by the Commission. The form of application and the information
11 required to be set forth in the application shall be
12 determined by the Commission. The Commission shall require
13 eligible applicants to submit with their applications such
14 supporting documents, including financial documents, as the
15 Commission deems necessary.

16 (f) All grant funds distributed in accordance with this
17 Section shall be paid to the qualified institution on behalf
18 of the recipient. Grants are applicable toward 2 semesters or
19 equivalent academic terms of enrollment within an academic
20 year. Up to 3% of the appropriation for this program may be
21 used by the Commission for the costs of administering the
22 program. The Commission may establish a methodology for the
23 distribution of grants, prioritizing all of the following:

24 (1) Students who demonstrate the most financial need.

25 (2) First-generation students.

26 (3) Minority students.

1 (4) Students residing in rural areas.

2 (g) The Commission shall adopt all necessary and proper
3 rules not inconsistent with this Section for its effective
4 implementation.

5 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1,
6 2025.