



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB4386

Introduced 1/14/2026, by Rep. Jed Davis

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Online Degree Pathway Pilot Program Act. Establishes the Online Degree Pathway Pilot Program to provide a single, unified, online bachelor's degree program culminating in a degree conferred by a participating university. Provides that application for admission to the Pathway Program shall begin on March 15, 2027 for the 2027-2028 academic year. Provides that the University of Illinois shall serve as the primary degree-granting institution for the Pathway Program. Provides that a student enrolled in any of grades 9 through 12 in a public or nonpublic school is eligible to enroll in dual enrollment courses at any public community college. Provides that credit earned under the Pathway Program or through dual enrollment shall transfer automatically and apply fully toward a bachelor's degree curriculum. Provides that the Board of Higher Education shall develop statewide articulation maps ensuring full alignment among community college courses and university upper-division courses. Prohibits a public university or State agency from circumventing or attempting to circumvent the Act through certain actions. Requires the Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board to jointly submit an annual report to the General Assembly. Grants joint rulemaking authority to the Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board. Repeals the Act 5 years after the effective date of the Act. Contains a severability clause, and makes other changes. Effective immediately.

LRB104 17506 LNS 30933 b

STATE MANDATES
ACT MAY REQUIRE
REIMBURSEMENT

A BILL FOR

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 Online
5 Degree Pathway Pilot Program Act.

6 Section 5. Purpose. The purpose of this Act is to
7 establish a pilot program for a unified, statewide, low-cost,
8 bachelor's degree pathway that eliminates transfer barriers,
9 reduces tuition costs, expands dual-enrollment opportunities,
10 and provides students in this State with a seamless route from
11 high school to bachelor's degree completion. This Act promotes
12 affordability, access, and workforce readiness without
13 increasing the financial burden on taxpayers.

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

15 "Community college tuition rate" means the in-district,
16 per-credit-hour tuition rate charged by a public community
17 college in this State.

18 "Dual enrollment course" means a community college course
19 taken by a high school student under Section 25 that confers
20 both high school and college credit.

21 "Participating university" means the University of
22 Illinois or any other public university designated by the

1 Board of Higher Education to confer degrees under this Act.

2 "Pathway Program" means the Online Degree Pathway Pilot
3 Program established in Section 15.

4 "Seamless transfer" means automatic acceptance and
5 application of credit without reevaluation, reclassification,
6 or additional requirements.

7 Section 15. Statewide online degree pathway established.

8 (a) The Online Degree Pathway Pilot Program is established
9 to provide a single, unified, online bachelor's degree program
10 culminating in a degree conferred by a participating
11 university.

12 (b) Application for admission to the Pathway Program shall
13 begin on March 15, 2027 for the 2027-2028 academic year. The
14 Illinois Community College Board shall receive and consider
15 applications for admittance to the Pathway Program.

16 (c) The Pathway Program shall consist of:

17 (1) 60 credit hours completed through any public
18 community college in this State; and

19 (2) 60 credit hours completed through a participating
20 university, delivered online.

21 (d) All coursework within the Pathway Program shall be
22 prealigned through statewide curriculum agreements.

23 (e) No transfer application, credit reevaluation, or
24 additional prerequisites may be imposed on a student
25 participating in the Pathway Program.

1 (f) A student shall pay one tuition rate, equal to the
2 community college tuition rate, for all 120 credit hours in
3 the Pathway Program, regardless of whether coursework is
4 delivered by a community college or a participating
5 university.

6 (g) No more than 2,000 students may be accepted into the
7 Pathway Program annually.

8 Section 20. Degree-granting authority.

9 (a) The University of Illinois shall serve as the primary
10 degree-granting institution for the Pathway Program.

11 (b) The Board of Higher Education may authorize additional
12 public universities to confer degrees under this Act.

13 (c) All coursework completed through the Pathway Program
14 shall apply fully toward a bachelor's degree without
15 reevaluation.

16 Section 25. Dual enrollment.

17 (a) A student enrolled in any of grades 9 through 12 in a
18 public or nonpublic school in this State is eligible to enroll
19 in dual enrollment courses at any public community college in
20 this State.

21 (b) Subject to appropriation, the Illinois Community
22 College Board shall pay the full community college tuition
23 rate for up to 30 semester credit hours of dual enrollment
24 courses for each eligible student.

1 (c) Courses taken under this Section shall apply toward:

2 (1) high school graduation requirements; and

3 (2) the first 60 credit hours of the Pathway Program.

4 (d) A participating university shall accept all dual
5 enrollment credit earned under this Section without a
6 reevaluation or reduction of credit.

7 (e) A student may exceed 30 credit hours under this
8 Section at the student's own expense or through locally
9 negotiated agreements.

10 (f) Dual enrollment tuition payments under subsection (b)
11 of this Section apply only to students participating in the
12 Pathway Program and count toward the Pathway Program's annual
13 enrollment cap under subsection (g) of Section 15.

14 Section 30. Seamless transfer mandate.

15 (a) Credit earned under the Pathway Program or through
16 dual enrollment shall transfer automatically and apply fully
17 toward a bachelor's degree curriculum.

18 (b) No public university may:

19 (1) deny a transfer of credit;

20 (2) require a reevaluation of credit;

21 (3) impose additional prerequisites; or

22 (4) require duplicative coursework.

23 (c) Any violation of this Section is void and without
24 effect.

1 Section 35. Curriculum alignment.

2 (a) The Board of Higher Education shall develop statewide
3 articulation maps ensuring full alignment among community
4 college courses and university upper-division courses.

5 (b) No public university may independently alter
6 curriculum requirements in a manner that undermines or
7 increases the cost of the Pathway Program.

8 Section 40. Anti-circumvention. No public university or
9 State agency may circumvent or attempt to circumvent this Act
10 by:

11 (1) adopting internal policies that impose
12 above-baseline requirements;

13 (2) reclassifying courses to prevent transfer;

14 (3) creating duplicative or remedial requirements; or

15 (4) imposing fees, surcharges, or administrative
16 barriers on Pathway Program students.

17 Any such action is void ab initio.

18 Section 45. Reporting. On or before March 15, 2028 and
19 each year thereafter, the Board of Higher Education and the
20 Illinois Community College Board shall jointly submit a report
21 to the General Assembly summarizing:

22 (1) the number of students participating in the
23 Pathway Program;

24 (2) the number of dual enrollment credits earned;

1 (3) student cost savings compared to traditional
2 pathways;

3 (4) systemwide transfer compliance; and

4 (5) recommendations for program improvement.

5 Section 90. Rulemaking. The Board of Higher Education and
6 the Illinois Community College Board may jointly adopt any
7 rules necessary to implement this Act.

8 Section 95. Repealer. This Act is repealed 5 years after
9 the effective date of this Act.

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

12 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
13 becoming law.