



## 104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB5503

Introduced 2/13/2026, by Rep. Edgar González, Jr.

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

105 ILCS 5/22-28 new

Amends the School Code. Provides that the Illinois Community College Board shall establish an outcome-based Adult Workforce High School Diploma Program to allow eligible students to qualify for enrollment in the Program, and, upon successful completion of the Program, to be awarded a high school diploma. Sets forth requirements for approved Program providers and Program funding. Requires each approved Program provider to submit an annual report to the Board regarding the Program. Requires the Board to submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the Program. Repeals the provisions on June 30, 2030.

LRB104 20646 LNS 34143 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 School Code is amended by adding Section  
5 22-28 as follows:

6 (105 ILCS 5/22-28 new)

7 Sec. 22-28. Adult Workforce High School Diploma Program.

8 (a) In this Section:

9 "Academic skill intake assessment" means a  
10 criterion-referenced assessment of numeracy and literacy  
11 skills with high reliability and validity as determined by  
12 third-party research, which may be administered in person or  
13 online.

14 "Adult Workforce High School Diploma Program" or "Program"  
15 means the Program established under this Section.

16 "Approved Program provider" means an eligible Program  
17 provider that applies to participate in the Program, is  
18 approved by the Board to administer the Program, and agrees to  
19 meet all Program requirements.

20 "Average cost per graduate" means the average cost per  
21 graduate calculated in accordance with subsection (f).

22 "Board" means the Illinois Community College Board.

23 "Cohort" means all students who enter the Program between

1 July 1 and June 30 of each Program year.

2 "Eligible student" means a person ineligible for  
3 reenrollment under subsection (b) of Section 26-2 and 34 CFR  
4 300.102 who resides in this State, has not attained a high  
5 school diploma or its recognized equivalent, who requires 10  
6 units of credit or less to graduate under the requirements of  
7 Sections 27-605, 27-610, and 27-615.

8 "Employability skills certification" means a certificate  
9 earned by demonstrating professional nontechnical skills  
10 through assessment and includes, but is not limited to, the  
11 program standards of the United States Department of Labor's  
12 Skills to Pay the Bills: Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace  
13 Success program.

14 "Graduation rate" means the graduation rate calculated in  
15 accordance with subsection (g).

16 "Measurement period" means the 2-year period beginning  
17 July 1 of the year the cohort begins through June 30 of the  
18 subsequent fiscal year.

19 "Milestones" means measures of student progress for which  
20 funds are disbursed to an approved Program provider.

21 "Program funding" means funding received by an approved  
22 Program provider.

23 "Program year" means the period beginning on July 1 of  
24 each year and ending on June 30 of the following year.

25 "Transcript evaluation" means a documented summary of  
26 credits earned in a previous public or nonpublic, accredited

1 high school compared with this State's requirements to earn a  
2 high school diploma.

3 "Workforce credential" means a third-party credential that  
4 either (i) is a part of a sequence of credentials that can be  
5 accumulated over time to build an individual's qualifications  
6 to advance along a career pathway and results in a certificate  
7 or (ii) verifies an individual's qualifications or competence  
8 and is issued by a third party with the relevant authority to  
9 issue the credential.

10 (b) The Board shall establish an outcome-based Adult  
11 Workforce High School Diploma Program to allow an eligible  
12 student to qualify for enrollment in the Program, and, upon  
13 successful completion of the Program, to be awarded a high  
14 school diploma.

15 (c) The Board shall approve Program providers to  
16 administer the Program as follows:

17 (1) not later than August 15 of each year, the Board  
18 shall make available an application for third-party  
19 entities to apply to become an approved Program provider;

20 (2) not later than September 15 of each year, the  
21 Board shall review applications, approve Program providers  
22 that meet the requirements set forth in this Section, and  
23 make available a list of approved Program providers on the  
24 Board's public website; and

25 (3) an approved Program provider shall be authorized  
26 to begin enrolling eligible students upon being approved

1 by the Board as an approved Program provider.

2 (d) An approved Program provider shall:

3 (1) be accredited by:

4 (A) the Board of Higher Education;

5 (B) the Higher Learning Commission; or

6 (C) holding an active accreditation from one of  
7 the 7 United States regional accreditors, including:

8 (i) the Middle States Commission on Higher  
9 Education;

10 (ii) the New England Association of Schools  
11 and Colleges;

12 (iii) the Higher Learning Commission;

13 (iv) the Northwest Commission on Colleges and  
14 Universities;

15 (v) the Southern Association of Colleges and  
16 Schools Commission on Colleges;

17 (vi) the Accrediting Commission for Schools,  
18 Western Association of Schools and Colleges;

19 (vii) the Accrediting Commission for Community  
20 and Junior Colleges; or

21 (viii) any successor entities or  
22 consolidations of the above, including Cognia.

23 (2) offer the following to an eligible student at no  
24 cost:

25 (A) an academic skill intake assessment and  
26 transcript evaluation;

1           (B) a documented plan that includes the  
2           requirements for the student to complete the Program  
3           and earn a high school diploma;

4           (C) remedial education services in numeracy and  
5           literacy;

6           (D) a course catalog that includes all courses  
7           necessary to earn a high school diploma;

8           (E) one or more programs through which the student  
9           can earn a workforce credential;

10          (F) one or more programs through which the student  
11          can earn an employability skills certification;

12          (G) one or more courses that help the student  
13          enter or advance within a specific occupation or  
14          occupational cluster; and

15          (H) all courses necessary to meet the requirements  
16          to earn a high school diploma.

17          (e) An approved Program provider must meet the following  
18          standards for each cohort at the conclusion of each cohort  
19          measurement period:

20               (1) have a graduation rate of not less than 50%  
21               beginning with the second program cohort; and

22               (2) have an average cost per graduate of not more than  
23               \$7,500.

24          If an approved Program provider fails to meet the  
25          standards under paragraphs (1) and (2), the Board shall place  
26          the approved Program provider on probationary status for the

1 remainder of the Program year. If an approved Program provider  
2 fails to meet the standards under paragraphs (1) and (2) by the  
3 end of the subsequent Program year, the approved Program  
4 provider may no longer be an approved Program provider.

5 (f) The average cost per graduate shall be calculated by  
6 dividing the total Program funding disbursed to an approved  
7 Program provider for a cohort during the period from the  
8 beginning of the cohort through the end of the measurement  
9 period by the total number of students in that cohort who  
10 earned a high school diploma during the measurement period.

11 (g) The graduation rate shall be calculated by dividing  
12 the number of students in a cohort who earned a high school  
13 diploma during the measurement period by the number of  
14 students in the cohort for which an approved Program provider  
15 has received Program funding.

16 (h) Subject to appropriation, the Board is authorized to  
17 retain 2% of Program funds for administrative costs and  
18 disburse any remaining funds appropriated by the General  
19 Assembly to approved Program providers based on milestones  
20 reached by students in amounts not to exceed:

21 (1) for the completion of each half unit of high  
22 school credit if such credit is required to earn a high  
23 school diploma, \$275;

24 (2) for each employability skills certification earned  
25 by a student, \$275;

26 (3) for each workforce credential earned by a student

1 if the credential requires not more than 50 hours of  
2 training, \$275;

3 (4) for each workforce credential earned by a student  
4 if the credential requires more than 50 but not more than  
5 100 hours of training, \$550;

6 (5) for each workforce credential earned by a student  
7 if the credential requires more than 100 hours of  
8 training, \$825; or

9 (6) for each high school diploma earned by a student,  
10 \$1,100.

11 In order to receive the funds provided for in this  
12 subsection, an approved Program provider shall, no later than  
13 the tenth day of each month, submit to the Board a report that  
14 includes all milestones met by students in the previous month.  
15 An approved Program provider shall report the number of  
16 enrolled students for whom invoices have been submitted and  
17 the number of enrolled students for whom invoices have not  
18 been submitted in the monthly invoices submitted under this  
19 subsection. The Board shall pay approved Program providers in  
20 the order in which invoices are received until all available  
21 moneys are exhausted.

22 The Board shall provide a written update to the approved  
23 Program providers on or before the last calendar day of each  
24 month that includes all of the following:

25 (A) the aggregate total dollars that have been paid to  
26 approved Program providers to date;

1           (B) the aggregate number of enrolled students in this  
2           State for whom an invoice has been submitted; and

3           (C) the aggregate number of enrolled students in this  
4           State for whom an invoice has not been submitted.

5           (i) Funds received by an approved Program provider under  
6           this Section shall be used for providing and preparing for  
7           instruction, instructional materials, and support services for  
8           students, including coaching and mentoring. The funds shall  
9           not be used to build or expand brick-and-mortar  
10           infrastructure.

11           (j) An approved Program provider may not require or accept  
12           any financial payments from a student enrolled in the program.

13           (k) In 2027 and each year thereafter, no later than August  
14           15, each approved Program provider shall submit a report to  
15           the Board that includes:

16           (1) the number of eligible students participating in  
17           the Program;

18           (2) the number of units of high school credit earned  
19           by the students;

20           (3) the number of employability skills certificates  
21           earned by the students;

22           (4) the number of workforce credentials earned by the  
23           students; and

24           (5) the number of students who earned a high school  
25           diploma through participation in the Program.

26           (1) Beginning in 2027, no later than December 1 of each

1 year, the Board shall provide the Governor and the General  
2 Assembly a report that includes:

3 (1) the information reported to the Board under  
4 subsection (k);

5 (2) the amount of funds disbursed to each approved  
6 Program provider and the milestones for which the funding  
7 was disbursed;

8 (3) the graduation rate for each approved Program  
9 provider; and

10 (4) the average cost per graduate for each approved  
11 Program provider.

12 (m) This Section is repealed on June 30, 2030.