



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

SB3598

Introduced 2/5/2026, by Sen. Meg Loughran Cappel

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

105 ILCS 5/21B-70

Amends the Educator Licensure Article of the School Code. In a provision regarding the Illinois Teaching Excellence Program, changes the definition of "hard-to-staff school" to mean a public school that either (i) is identified as hard-to-staff based on data reported on its school report card or (ii) does not have a school report card but serves a student population in which 30% or more of the student enrollment is considered low-income as determined by the State Board of Education using available enrollment or funding data, and provides that the State Board may not deny a National Board certified teacher a retention bonus solely because the public school at which the teacher is employed does not have a school report card.

LRB104 19018 LNS 32463 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 changing Section
5 21B-70 as follows:

6 (105 ILCS 5/21B-70)

7 Sec. 21B-70. Illinois Teaching Excellence Program.

8 (a) As used in this Section:

9 "Diverse candidate" means a candidate who identifies with
10 any of the ethnicities reported on the Illinois Report Card
11 other than White.

12 "Hard-to-staff school" means a public school that either
13 (i) is identified as hard-to-staff based on data reported on
14 the school report card under Section 10-17a of this Code or
15 (ii) does not have a school report card under Section 10-17a of
16 this Code but serves a student population in which ~~no less than~~
17 30% or more of the student enrollment is considered low-income
18 as determined by the State Board of Education using available
19 enrollment or funding data ~~reported by the report card under~~
20 Section 10-17a of this Code.

21 "National Board certified teacher candidate cohort
22 facilitator" means a National Board certified teacher who
23 collaborates to advance the goal of supporting all other

1 candidate cohorts other than diverse candidate cohorts through
2 the Illinois National Board for Professional Teaching
3 Standards Comprehensive Support System.

4 "National Board certified teacher diverse candidate cohort
5 facilitator" means a National Board certified teacher who
6 collaborates to advance the goal of supporting racially and
7 ethnically diverse candidates through the Illinois National
8 Board for Professional Teaching Standards Comprehensive
9 Support System.

10 "National Board certified teacher diverse liaison" means
11 an individual or entity that supports the National Board
12 certified teacher leading a diverse candidate cohort.

13 "National Board certified teacher liaison" means an
14 individual or entity that supports the National Board
15 certified teacher leading candidate cohorts other than diverse
16 candidate cohorts.

17 "National Board certified teacher rural or remote or
18 distant candidate cohort facilitator" means a National Board
19 certified teacher who collaborates to advance the goal of
20 supporting rural or remote candidates through the Illinois
21 National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
22 Comprehensive Support System.

23 "National Board certified teacher rural or remote or
24 distant liaison" means an individual or entity that supports
25 the National Board certified teacher leading a rural or remote
26 candidate cohort.

1 "Qualified educator" means a teacher or school counselor
2 currently employed in a school district who is in the process
3 of obtaining certification through the National Board for
4 Professional Teaching Standards or who has completed
5 certification and holds a current Professional Educator
6 License with a National Board for Professional Teaching
7 Standards designation or a retired teacher or school counselor
8 who holds a Professional Educator License with a National
9 Board for Professional Teaching Standards designation.

10 "Rural or remote" or "rural or remote or distant" means
11 local codes 32, 33, 41, 42, and 43 of the New Urban-Centric
12 Locale Codes, as defined by the National Center for Education
13 Statistics.

14 "Tier 1" has the meaning given to that term under Section
15 18-8.15.

16 "Tier 2" has the meaning given to that term under Section
17 18-8.15.

18 (b) Any funds appropriated for the Illinois Teaching
19 Excellence Program must be used to provide monetary assistance
20 and incentives for qualified educators who are employed by or
21 retired from school districts and who have or are in the
22 process of obtaining licensure through the National Board for
23 Professional Teaching Standards. The goal of the program is to
24 improve instruction and student performance.

25 The State Board of Education shall allocate an amount as
26 annually appropriated by the General Assembly for the Illinois

1 Teaching Excellence Program for (i) application or re-take
2 fees for each qualified educator seeking to complete
3 certification through the National Board for Professional
4 Teaching Standards, to be paid directly to the National Board
5 for Professional Teaching Standards, and (ii) incentives under
6 paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) of subsection (c) for each
7 qualified educator, to be distributed to the respective school
8 district, and incentives under paragraph (5) of subsection
9 (c), to be distributed to the respective school district or
10 directly to the qualified educator. The school district shall
11 distribute this payment to each eligible teacher or school
12 counselor as a single payment.

13 The State Board of Education's annual budget must set out
14 by separate line item the appropriation for the program.
15 Unless otherwise provided by appropriation, qualified
16 educators are eligible for monetary assistance and incentives
17 outlined in subsections (c) and (d) of this Section.

18 (c) When there are adequate funds available, monetary
19 assistance and incentives shall include the following:

20 (1) A maximum of \$2,000 toward the application or
21 re-take fee for teachers or school counselors in a Tier 1
22 school district who apply on a first-come, first-serve
23 basis for National Board certification.

24 (2) A maximum of \$2,000 toward the application or
25 re-take fee for teachers or school counselors in a school
26 district other than a Tier 1 school district who apply on a

1 first-come, first-serve basis for National Board
2 certification.

3 (3) A maximum of \$1,000 toward the National Board for
4 Professional Teaching Standards' renewal application fee.

5 (4) (Blank).

6 (5) An annual incentive of no more than \$2,250
7 prorated at \$50 per hour, which shall be paid to each
8 qualified educator currently employed in a school district
9 who holds both a National Board for Professional Teaching
10 Standards designation and a current corresponding
11 certificate issued by the National Board for Professional
12 Teaching Standards and who agrees, in writing, to provide
13 up to 45 hours of mentoring or National Board for
14 Professional Teaching Standards professional development
15 or both during the school year to classroom teachers or
16 school counselors, as applicable. Funds must be disbursed
17 on a first-come, first-serve basis, with priority given to
18 Tier 1 school districts. Mentoring shall include, either
19 singly or in combination, the following:

20 (A) National Board for Professional Teaching
21 Standards certification candidates.

22 (B) National Board for Professional Teaching
23 Standards re-take candidates.

24 (C) National Board for Professional Teaching
25 Standards renewal candidates.

26 (D) (Blank).

1 Funds may also be used for professional development
2 training provided by the National Board Resource Center.

3 Funds may also be used for instructional leadership
4 training for qualified educators interested in supporting
5 implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards or teaching
6 and learning priorities of the State Board of Education or
7 both.

8 (d) In addition to the monetary assistance and incentives
9 provided under subsection (c), if adequate funds are
10 available, incentives shall include the following incentives
11 for the program in rural or remote schools or school districts
12 or for programs working with diverse candidates or for
13 retention bonuses for hard-to-staff schools, to be distributed
14 to the respective school district or directly to the qualified
15 educator or entity:

16 (1) A one-time incentive of \$3,000 payable to National
17 Board certified teachers teaching in Tier 1 or Tier 2
18 rural or remote school districts or rural or remote
19 schools in Tier 1 or Tier 2 school districts, with
20 priority given to teachers teaching in Tier 1 rural or
21 remote school districts or rural or remote schools in Tier
22 1 school districts.

23 (2) An annual incentive of \$3,200 for National Board
24 certified teacher rural or remote or distant candidate
25 cohort facilitators, diverse candidate cohort
26 facilitators, and candidate cohort facilitators. Priority

1 shall be given to rural or remote candidate cohort
2 facilitators and diverse candidate cohort facilitators.

3 (3) An annual incentive of \$2,500 for National Board
4 certified teacher rural or remote or distant liaisons,
5 diverse liaisons, and liaisons. Priority shall be given to
6 rural or remote liaisons and diverse liaisons.

7 (4) An annual retention bonus of \$4,000 per year for 2
8 consecutive years shall be awarded to National Board
9 certified teachers employed in hard-to-staff schools.
10 Funds must be disbursed on a first-come, first-served
11 basis.

12 (e) The State Board of Education may not deny a National
13 Board certified teacher a retention bonus under this Section
14 solely because the public school at which the teacher is
15 employed does not have a school report card under Section
16 10-17a of this Code.

17 (Source: P.A. 103-122, eff. 6-30-23; 103-207, eff. 1-1-24;
18 103-605, eff. 7-1-24.)