

# SB2055



## 102ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2021 and 2022

SB2055

Introduced 2/26/2021, by Sen. Omar Aquino

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

30 ILCS 105/5.935 new  
110 ILCS 947/65.110 new

Amends the Higher Education Student Assistance Act. Provides that, beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission shall implement and administer a program to award Early Childhood Workforce Free College grants to all eligible child care workers seeking to enroll in an eligible postsecondary institution; defines terms. Specifies grant eligibility and amount, renewal requirements, and repayment requirements. Requires the Illinois Early Learning Council to establish the Early Childhood Workforce Free College Advisory Committee to advise the Commission on all matters relating to the program. Amends the State Finance Act to create the Early Childhood Workforce Free College Fund. Effective immediately.

LRB102 17175 CMG 22626 b

FISCAL NOTE ACT  
MAY APPLY

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 5. The State Finance Act is amended by adding  
5 Section 5.935 as follows:

6 (30 ILCS 105/5.935 new)

7 Sec. 5.935. The Early Childhood Workforce Free College  
8 Fund.

9 Section 10. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is  
10 amended by adding Section 65.110 as follows:

11 (110 ILCS 947/65.110 new)

12 Sec. 65.110. Early Childhood Workforce Free College grant  
13 program.

14 (a) In this Section:

15 "Child care or early childhood education setting" means a  
16 facility licensed under the Child Care Act of 1969, a licensed  
17 or license-exempt child care provider under Section 9A-11 of  
18 the Illinois Public Aid Code, a federal Head Start or Early  
19 Head Start program, or a preschool program funded under  
20 Section 2-3.71 of the School Code.

21 "Child care worker" means an Illinois resident who has

1 been working in any child care or early childhood education  
2 setting for at least 2 years or, at some point during the last  
3 5 years, worked in such a setting for the equivalent of 2  
4 years.

5 "Eligible postsecondary institution" means any public  
6 institution in this State, including the University of  
7 Illinois, Southern Illinois University, Chicago State  
8 University, Eastern Illinois University, Governors State  
9 University, Illinois State University, Northeastern Illinois  
10 University, Northern Illinois University, and Western Illinois  
11 University, any public community college in this State, or any  
12 other public university, college, or community college now or  
13 hereafter established or authorized by the General Assembly.

14 "Eligible postsecondary program" means a program that  
15 includes a curriculum of courses to maintain a classroom role  
16 in any child care or early childhood education setting,  
17 leading to a Child Development certificate or associate degree  
18 (CDA), an associate or bachelor's degree in Early Childhood  
19 Education (ECE), or a Professional Educator License (PEL).

20 "Student aid" means a scholarship or grant, other than an  
21 Early Childhood Workforce Free College grant created under  
22 this Section, awarded to a student from any source that does  
23 not require repayment. "Student aid" does not include student  
24 loans and work-study awards.

25 (b) Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, subject to  
26 appropriation, the Commission shall implement and administer a

1 program to award Early Childhood Workforce Free College grants  
2 to all eligible child care workers seeking to enroll in an  
3 eligible postsecondary program at an eligible postsecondary  
4 institution. All of the following terms and conditions shall  
5 apply to the program:

6 (1) To be eligible for a grant, a student must (i)  
7 possess a high school diploma or a high school equivalency  
8 certificate, (ii) be admitted to and enrolled in an  
9 eligible postsecondary program at an eligible  
10 postsecondary institution, and (iii) have an individually  
11 adjusted gross income equal to or less than \$65,000.

12 (2) Students applying for a grant must annually  
13 complete the Early Childhood Education Workforce Free  
14 College grant application. A student who has the capacity  
15 to draw federal student aid shall complete the Free  
16 Application for Federal Student Aid each academic year in  
17 which he or she seeks to receive a grant.

18 (3) To continue to receive a grant, a student must  
19 maintain Illinois residency.

20 (4) Each academic year, a grant shall be equal to the  
21 cost of tuition and mandatory fees at an eligible  
22 postsecondary institution or eligible postsecondary  
23 program attended, less all other student aid. Student aid  
24 shall be credited first to the student's tuition and  
25 mandatory fees. Eligible students who receive student aid  
26 exceeding their tuition cost and mandatory fees and

1 demonstrate additional need shall be eligible to receive  
2 additional financial support, including, but not limited  
3 to, funds for the purchase of required books and supplies,  
4 lab fees, and activity fees. Each eligible postsecondary  
5 institution or eligible postsecondary program must  
6 annually report to the Commission its undergraduate  
7 tuition rate for Illinois residents.

8 (5) A student is eligible for a grant and any grant  
9 renewals until (i) he or she has earned a bachelor's  
10 degree in ECE, (ii) he or she obtains a Professional  
11 Educator License, or (iii) 8 years have passed from the  
12 date of the student's initial receipt of a grant under  
13 this program.

14 (6) After completion of or disenrolling from his or  
15 her program of study, the student must reside and work  
16 within this State in a child care or early childhood  
17 education setting for the same period of time in which he  
18 or she received funding under the program. If the student  
19 fails to fulfill this requirement, the student must repay  
20 the total grant amount awarded to him or her through  
21 installments in accordance with rules adopted by the  
22 Commission.

23 Exceptions to the qualification requirements under  
24 paragraphs (1) through (6) of this subsection must be made by  
25 the Commission for extenuating circumstances, as provided in  
26 rules adopted by the Commission, with advice from the Early

1 Childhood Workforce Free College Advisory Committee created  
2 under subsection (e).

3 The Commission must adopt rules, in consultation with the  
4 Early Childhood Workforce Free College Advisory Committee  
5 created under subsection (e), on the distribution of grants  
6 under this subsection.

7 (c) In awarding grants under this Section, if, in any  
8 fiscal year, the amount appropriated for the grants is less  
9 than the amount determined necessary to cover the cost of  
10 attendance for all eligible applicants, the Commission must  
11 proportionately reduce the grants.

12 (d) The Early Childhood Workforce Free College Fund is  
13 created as a special fund in the State treasury. The Fund shall  
14 consist of money appropriated by the General Assembly and any  
15 gifts, bequests, or donations made to the Fund. All money in  
16 the Fund shall be used only by the Commission for the purposes  
17 of this Section.

18 (e) The Illinois Early Learning Council must establish the  
19 Early Childhood Workforce Free College Advisory Committee for  
20 the purpose of advising the Commission on all matters related  
21 to the Early Childhood Workforce Free College grant program.  
22 The Advisory Committee must be comprised of all of the  
23 following members, appointed by the Illinois Early Learning  
24 Council:

25 (1) One representative each from the Governor's Office  
26 of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois Community

1 College Board, and the Board of Higher Education, one of  
2 whom shall serve as a chairperson, and the remaining  
3 members shall be ex officio and nonvoting members.

4 (2) Eight members as follows:

5 (A) one member who is a preschool teacher at a  
6 public school;

7 (B) one member who is a child care center  
8 preschool teacher;

9 (C) one member who is a child care center infant or  
10 toddler teacher;

11 (D) one member who is a child care center or early  
12 learning teacher's assistant at a public school;

13 (E) one member who is a home child care provider  
14 through the Department of Human Services' Child Care  
15 Assistance Program;

16 (F) one member representing statewide trade or  
17 labor unions;

18 (G) one member representing organizations engaging  
19 in advocacy of the early childhood workforce; and

20 (H) one member who is an administrator of federal  
21 Head Start grant program funds, State preschool funds,  
22 or site-administered grants under the Child Care  
23 Assistance Program.

24 Appointed members of the Advisory Committee, other than  
25 initial appointees, shall serve for a term of 3 years or until  
26 a replacement is named. All initial members shall be appointed

1 no later than August 1, 2022. Of the initial appointees, 5  
2 members shall serve a term of 2 years and 6 members shall serve  
3 a term of 3 years. Any member appointed to fill a vacancy  
4 occurring prior to the expiration of the term for which his or  
5 her predecessor was appointed shall be appointed for the  
6 remainder of that term. The Advisory Committee shall meet at  
7 least once every 6 months and may meet more frequently at the  
8 call of the chairperson. A simple majority of those appointed  
9 shall constitute a quorum. The affirmative vote of a majority  
10 of those present and voting shall be necessary for Advisory  
11 Committee action. Members of the Advisory Committee shall  
12 receive no compensation for their services, but may be  
13 reimbursed for their expenses incurred in performing their  
14 duties from funds appropriated to the Commission for that  
15 purpose. Administrative and other support to the Advisory  
16 Committee shall be provided by the Illinois Early Learning  
17 Council.

18 The Advisory Committee shall do all of the following:

19 (i) Study and make recommendations to the Commission  
20 that are related to the implementation of the Early  
21 Childhood Workforce Free College grant program.

22 (ii) Evaluate data received by the Commission to  
23 ensure the program is at full utilization.

24 (iii) Address access issues to the program, including,  
25 but not limited to, geographic, financial, cultural, and  
26 workplace settings.



1           Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
2    becoming law.