

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,  
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The School Code is amended by changing Section 3-15.12 as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/3-15.12) (from Ch. 122, par. 3-15.12)

Sec. 3-15.12. High school equivalency ~~testing program~~. The regional superintendent of schools and the Illinois Community College Board shall make available for qualified individuals residing within the region a High School Equivalency Testing Program and alternative methods of credentialing, as identified under this Section. For that purpose the regional superintendent alone or with other regional superintendents may establish and supervise a testing center or centers to administer the secure forms for high school equivalency testing to qualified persons. Such centers shall be under the supervision of the regional superintendent in whose region such centers are located, subject to the approval of the Executive Director of the Illinois Community College Board. The Illinois Community College Board shall also establish criteria and make available alternative methods of credentialing throughout the State.

An individual is eligible to apply to the regional

superintendent of schools for the region in which he or she resides if he or she is: (a) a person who is 17 years of age or older, has maintained residence in the State of Illinois, and is not a high school graduate; (b) a person who is successfully completing an alternative education program under Section 2-3.81, Article 13A, or Article 13B; or (c) a person who is enrolled in a youth education program sponsored by the Illinois National Guard. For purposes of this Section, residence is that abode which the applicant considers his or her home. Applicants may provide as sufficient proof of such residence and as an acceptable form of identification a driver's license, valid passport, military ID, or other form of government-issued national or foreign identification that shows the applicant's name, address, date of birth, signature, and photograph or other acceptable identification as may be allowed by law or as regulated by the Illinois Community College Board. Such regional superintendent shall determine if the applicant meets statutory and regulatory state standards.

If qualified the applicant shall at the time of such application pay a fee established by the Illinois Community College Board, which fee shall be paid into a special fund under the control and supervision of the regional superintendent. Such moneys received by the regional superintendent shall be used, first, for the expenses incurred in administering and scoring the examination, and next for other educational programs that are developed and designed by

the regional superintendent of schools to assist those who successfully complete high school equivalency testing or meet the criteria for alternative methods of credentialing in furthering their academic development or their ability to secure and retain gainful employment, including programs for the competitive award based on test scores of college or adult education scholarship grants or similar educational incentives. Any excess moneys shall be paid into the institute fund.

Any applicant who has achieved the minimum passing standards as established by the Illinois Community College Board shall be notified in writing by the regional superintendent and shall be issued a high school equivalency certificate on the forms provided by the Illinois Community College Board. The regional superintendent shall then certify to the Illinois Community College Board the score of the applicant and such other and additional information that may be required by the Illinois Community College Board. The moneys received therefrom shall be used in the same manner as provided for in this Section.

The Illinois Community College Board shall establish alternative methods of credentialing for the issuance of high school equivalency certification. In addition to high school equivalency testing, the following alternative methods of receiving a high school equivalency credential shall be made available to qualified individuals on or after January 1, 2018:

(A) High School Equivalency based on High School Credit. A qualified candidate may petition to have his or her high school transcripts evaluated to determine what the candidate needs to meet criteria as established by the Illinois Community College Board.

(B) High School Equivalency based on Post-Secondary Credit. A qualified candidate may petition to have his or her post-secondary transcripts evaluated to determine what the candidate needs to meet criteria established by the Illinois Community College Board.

(C) High School Equivalency based on a Foreign Diploma. A qualified candidate may petition to have his or her foreign high school or post-secondary transcripts evaluated to determine what the candidate needs to meet criteria established by the Illinois Community College Board.

(D) High School Equivalency based on Completion of a Competency-Based Program as approved by the Illinois Community College Board. The Illinois Community College Board shall establish guidelines for competency-based high school equivalency programs.

Any applicant who has attained the age of 17 years and maintained residence in the State of Illinois and is not a high school graduate, any person who has enrolled in a youth education program sponsored by the Illinois National Guard, or any person who has successfully completed an alternative

education program under Section 2-3.81, Article 13A, or Article 13B is eligible to apply for a high school equivalency certificate (if he or she meets the requirements prescribed by the Illinois Community College Board) upon showing evidence that he or she has completed, successfully, high school equivalency testing, administered by the United States Armed Forces Institute, official high school equivalency testing centers established in other states, Veterans' Administration Hospitals, or the office of the State Superintendent of Education for the Illinois State Penitentiary System and the Department of Corrections. Such applicant shall apply to the regional superintendent of the region wherein he or she has maintained residence, and, upon payment of a fee established by the Illinois Community College Board, the regional superintendent shall issue a high school equivalency certificate and immediately thereafter certify to the Illinois Community College Board the score of the applicant and such other and additional information as may be required by the Illinois Community College Board.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this Section, any applicant who has been out of school for at least one year may request the regional superintendent of schools to administer restricted high school equivalency testing upon written request of: the director of a program who certifies to the Chief Examiner of an official high school equivalency testing center that the applicant has completed a program of

instruction provided by such agencies as the Job Corps, the Postal Service Academy, or an apprenticeship training program; an employer or program director for purposes of entry into apprenticeship programs; another state's department of education in order to meet regulations established by that department of education; or a post high school educational institution for purposes of admission, the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation for licensing purposes, or the Armed Forces for induction purposes. The regional superintendent shall administer such testing, and the applicant shall be notified in writing that he or she is eligible to receive a high school equivalency certificate upon reaching age 17, provided he or she meets the standards established by the Illinois Community College Board.

Any test administered under this Section to an applicant who does not speak and understand English may at the discretion of the administering agency be given and answered in any language in which the test is printed. The regional superintendent of schools may waive any fees required by this Section in case of hardship. The regional superintendent of schools and the Illinois Community College Board shall waive any fees required by this Section for an applicant who meets all of the following criteria:

- (1) The applicant qualifies as a homeless person, child, or youth as defined in the Education for Homeless Children Act.

(2) The applicant has not attained 25 years of age as of the date of the scheduled test.

(3) The applicant can verify his or her status as a homeless person, child, or youth. A homeless services provider that is qualified to verify an individual's housing status, as determined by the Illinois Community College Board, and that has knowledge of the applicant's housing status may verify the applicant's status for purposes of this subdivision (3).

(4) The applicant has completed a high school equivalency preparation course through an Illinois Community College Board-approved provider.

(5) The applicant is taking the test at a testing center operated by a regional superintendent of schools or the Cook County High School Equivalency Office.

In counties of over 3,000,000 population, a high school equivalency certificate shall contain the signatures of the Executive Director of the Illinois Community College Board and the superintendent, president, or other chief executive officer of the institution where high school equivalency testing instruction occurred and any other signatures authorized by the Illinois Community College Board.

The regional superintendent of schools shall furnish the Illinois Community College Board with any information that the Illinois Community College Board requests with regard to testing and certificates under this Section.

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HB2740 Enrolled

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(Source: P.A. 98-718, eff. 1-1-15; 98-719, eff. 1-1-15; 99-78, eff. 7-20-15; 99-742, eff. 1-1-17.)