



101ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2019 and 2020

HB2541

by Rep. Sonya M. Harper

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Re-Entering Citizens Civics Education Act. Provides that the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice shall provide a nonpartisan peer-led civics program throughout the correctional institutions of the State to teach civics to soon-to-be released citizens who will be re-entering society. Provides for the curriculum and eligibility for the program. Provides that the program shall be taught by peer educators who are citizens incarcerated in the Department of Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice facilities and specially trained by experienced peer educators and established nonpartisan civic organizations. Provides that the nonpartisan civic organizations shall provide adequate training to peer educators on matters including, but not limited to, voting rights, governmental institutions, current affairs, and simulations of voter registration, election, and democratic processes, and shall provide periodic updates to program content and to peer educators. Provides that the Department of Corrections shall adopt rules to carry out the Act within 6 months after the effective date of the Act. Provides that the funding for the voting rights and registration peer education program shall be subject to appropriation by the General Assembly. Contains provisions regarding funding for the program. Effective January 1, 2020.

LRB101 10372 RLC 55478 b

FISCAL NOTE ACT
MAY APPLY

A BILL FOR

1 AN ACT concerning criminal law.

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
5 Re-Entering Citizens Civics Education Act.

6 Section 5. Definitions. In this Act:

7 "Committed person" means a person committed to the
8 Department.

9 "Commitment" means a judicially determined placement in
10 the custody of the Department of Corrections or the Department
11 of Juvenile Justice on the basis of conviction or delinquency.

12 "Correctional institution or facility" means a Department
13 of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice building or
14 part of a Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile
15 Justice building where committed persons are detained in a
16 secure manner.

17 "Department" includes the Department of Corrections and
18 the Department of Juvenile Justice, unless the text solely
19 specifies a particular Department.

20 "Detainee" means a committed person in the physical custody
21 of the Department of Corrections or the Department of Juvenile
22 Justice.

23 "Director" includes the Director of the Department of

1 Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice unless the
2 text solely specifies a particular Director.

3 "Discharge" means the end of a sentence or the final
4 termination of a detainee's physical commitment to and
5 confinement in the Department of Corrections or Department of
6 Juvenile Justice.

7 "Peer educator" means an incarcerated citizen who is
8 specifically trained in voting rights education, who shall
9 conduct voting and civics education workshops for detainees
10 scheduled for discharge within 6 months.

11 "Program" means to the nonpartisan peer education and
12 information instruction established by this Act.

13 "Re-entering citizen" means any United States citizen who
14 is: 17 years of age or older; in the physical custody of the
15 Department of Corrections or Department of Juvenile Justice;
16 and scheduled to be re-entering society within 6 months.

17 Section 10. Purpose; program. The Department of
18 Corrections and the Department of Juvenile Justice shall
19 provide a nonpartisan peer-led civics program throughout the
20 correctional institutions of this State to teach civics to
21 soon-to-be released citizens who will be re-entering society.
22 The goal of the program is to promote the successful
23 integration of re-entering citizens, promote democracy, and
24 reduce rates of recidivism within this State. This program
25 shall coincide with and enhance existing laws to ensure that

1 re-entering citizens understand their civic responsibility and
2 know how to secure or regain their right to vote as part of the
3 exit process.

4 Section 15. Curriculum and eligibility. The civics peer
5 education program shall consist of a rigorous curriculum, and
6 participants shall be instructed on subjects including, but not
7 limited to, voting rights, governmental institutions, current
8 affairs, and simulations of voter registration, election, and
9 democratic processes. Each workshop shall consist of 3 sessions
10 that are 90 minutes each and that do not need to be taken
11 consecutively. The Department must offer re-entering citizens
12 scheduled to be discharged within 6 months with the civics peer
13 education program, and each re-entering citizen must enroll in
14 the program one to 6 months prior to his or her expected date
15 of release. This workshop must be included in the standard exit
16 process. Delays in a workshop being provided shall not cause
17 delays in discharge. Detainees may not be prevented from
18 attending workshops due to staffing shortages, lockdowns, or to
19 conflicts with family or legal visits, court dates, medical
20 appointments, commissary visits, recreational sessions,
21 dining, work, class, or bathing schedules. In case of conflict
22 or staffing shortages, re-entering citizens must be given full
23 opportunity to attend a workshop at a later time.

24 Section 20. Peer educator training. The civics peer

1 education program shall be taught by peer educators who are
2 citizens incarcerated in Department of Corrections and
3 Department of Juvenile Justice facilities and specially
4 trained by experienced peer educators and established
5 nonpartisan civic organizations. The nonpartisan civic
6 organizations shall provide adequate training to peer
7 educators on matters including, but not limited to, voting
8 rights, governmental institutions, current affairs, and
9 simulations of voter registration, election, and democratic
10 processes, and shall provide periodic updates to program
11 content and to peer educators.

12 Section 25. Voter and civic education program; content.

13 (a) Program content shall provide the following:

14 (1) nonpartisan information on voting history
15 procedures;

16 (2) nonpartisan definitions of local, State, and
17 federal governmental institutions and offices; and

18 (3) examples and simulations of registration and
19 voting processes.

20 (b) Established nonpartisan civic organizations shall
21 provide periodic updates to program content and, if applicable,
22 peer educators. Updates shall reflect major relevant changes to
23 election laws and processes in Illinois.

24 (c) Program content shall be delivered in the following
25 manners:

1 (1) verbally via peer educators;
2 (2) broadcasts via Department of Corrections and
3 Department of Juvenile Justice internal television
4 channels; or

5 (3) printed information packets.

6 (d) Peer educators shall disseminate printed information
7 for voting in the releasee's county, including, but not limited
8 to, election authorities' addresses, all applicable Internet
9 websites, and public contact information for all election
10 authorities. This information shall be compiled into a civics
11 handbook. The handbook shall also include key information
12 condensed into a pocket information card.

13 (e) This information shall also be compiled electronically
14 and posted on Department of Corrections' website along with the
15 Department of Corrections' Community Support Advisory Councils
16 websites.

17 (f) Department Directors shall ensure that the wardens of
18 all correctional institutions and facilities visibly post this
19 information on all common areas of their respective
20 institutions, and shall broadcast the same via in-house
21 institutional information television channels. Directors shall
22 ensure that updated information is distributed in a timely,
23 visible, and accessible manner.

24 (g) The Director of Corrections shall order, in a clearly
25 visible area of each parole office within this State, the
26 posting of a notice stipulating voter eligibility and that

1 contains the current Internet website address and voter
2 registration information provided by State Board of Elections
3 regarding voting rights for citizens released from the custody
4 of the Department.

5 (h) All program content and materials shall be distributed
6 annually to the Community Support Advisory Councils of the
7 Department of Corrections for use in re-entry programs across
8 this State.

9 Section 30. Power of the Department. The Department of
10 Corrections shall adopt rules to carry out this Act within 6
11 months after the effective date of this Act.

12 Section 35. Funding. The funding for the voting rights and
13 registration peer education program shall be subject to
14 appropriation by the General Assembly. The Department may use
15 private or federal funding to administer the program,
16 including, but not limited to, funds from the United States
17 Department of Justice.

18 Section 40. Voter and civic education program monitoring
19 and enforcement.

20 (a) The Director of Corrections and the Director of
21 Juvenile Justice shall ensure that wardens, program,
22 educational, and security and movement staff permit these
23 workshops to take place, and that re-entering citizens are

1 escorted to workshops in a consistent and timely manner.

2 (b) Compliance with this Act shall be monitored by a report
3 published annually by the Department of Corrections and the
4 Department of Juvenile Justice and containing data, including
5 numbers of re-entering citizens who enrolled in the program,
6 numbers of re-entering citizens who completed the program, and
7 total numbers of individuals discharged. Data shall be
8 disaggregated by institution, discharge, or residence address
9 of citizen, and other factors.

10 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect on
11 January 1, 2020.