



## 102ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2021 and 2022

HB5361

Introduced 1/31/2022, by Rep. Amy Grant

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Paraprofessional Fast Tract to Teaching Degree Pilot Program Act. Makes findings. Provides that the Fast Tract to Teaching Degree Pilot Program is created for a 2-year degree pathway by which paraprofessional educators may enroll to achieve the education requirements to attain a professional education license in this State, which shall comply with the standards of the State Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education. Provides that, subject to appropriation, beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year or if funds are not appropriated for the Program that academic year, beginning with the academic year in which funds are appropriated for the Program, the State Board of Education and the of Higher Education shall coordinate with each other to assign a qualified individual to serve as a Program director to develop the curriculum for the pathway. Provides that one public elementary or public secondary school and one public university in this State shall be chosen to develop a Program for transitioning paraprofessionals to teachers. Includes the core components of the Program. Provides that the State Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education must submit a report to the Governor, General Assembly, and the Legislative Reference Bureau detailing the impact of the Program and then the Program is dissolved and the provisions are repealed. Effective immediately.

LRB102 25055 RJT 34314 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 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the  
5 Paraprofessional Fast Track to Teaching Degree Pilot Program  
6 Act.

7 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds:

8 (1) In Illinois, starting 4-year teaching certified  
9 college graduates earn \$45,000 to 55,000 a year as  
10 compared to education paraprofessionals who are paid an  
11 average annual salary of \$29,232 and have an average  
12 starting salary is \$23,000.

13 (2) education paraprofessionals are required to have  
14 2-year associate's degree to teach in Illinois. Comparing  
15 this with other 2-year college technician certificates,  
16 such as a veterinary technicians who have an average  
17 salary of \$42,000, human resource assistants who have an  
18 average salary of \$45,000, forestry technicians who have  
19 an average salary of \$42,000, and paralegals who have an  
20 average salary of \$61,000, education paraprofessionals are  
21 not seeing the return on their educational investment.

22 (3) Local schools districts have strongly voiced their  
23 need for more qualified teachers.

1           (4) Alternative routes to teacher certification, which  
2           tend to be faster and less expensive than traditional  
3           programs, should be explored by the State to produce more  
4           teachers.

5           (5) It is in the interests of State residents to  
6           identify affordable pathways to secure a teacher licenses  
7           in Illinois.

8           (6) Paraprofessional educators are particularly  
9           well-positioned to take advantage of such pathways into  
10          teaching. Given access to high-quality certification  
11          programs tailored to their specific experiences and needs,  
12          they can make a significant contribution to local efforts  
13          to address teacher shortages.

14          (7) It is in the interests of State residents to have  
15          an accredited paraprofessional to teaching degree pathway  
16          based on both campus-based instruction and courses offered  
17          in the schools where our candidates work, while also  
18          giving them opportunities to earn academic credit by  
19          demonstrating the knowledge and skills they have mastered  
20          in their jobs.

21          Section 10. Definitions. As used in this Act, unless the  
22          context otherwise requires:

23                 "Paraprofessional" or "paraprofessional educator" means a  
24          person who holds a paraprofessional educator endorsement in  
25          accordance with the School Code.

1           "Program" means the Paraprofessional Fast Tract to  
2 Teaching Degree Pilot Program.

3           Section 15. Creation of a 2-year degree pathway. The  
4 Paraprofessional Fast Tract to Teaching Degree Pilot Program  
5 is created for a 2-year degree pathway by which  
6 paraprofessional educators may enroll to achieve the education  
7 requirements to attain a professional education license in  
8 this State, which shall comply with the standards of the State  
9 Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education.

10           Section 20. Program requirements.

11           (a) Subject to appropriation, beginning with the 2022-2023  
12 academic year or, if funds are not appropriated for the  
13 Program that academic year, beginning with the academic year  
14 in which funds are appropriated for the Program, the State  
15 Board of Education and the of Higher Education shall  
16 coordinate with each other to assign a qualified individual to  
17 serve as a Program director to develop the curriculum for the  
18 2-year pathway created in Section 15. If a source of outside  
19 funding for the Program director is secured to support the  
20 development of the Program, the State Board of Education and  
21 Board of Higher Education shall facilitate the approval of the  
22 paraprofessional to teacher bachelor degree curriculum pathway  
23 for the public institutions agreeing to participate in the  
24 Program.

1 (b) Under the Program, one public elementary or public  
2 secondary school and one public university in this State shall  
3 be chosen to develop a Program for transitioning  
4 paraprofessionals to teachers through the Program.

5 The core components of the Program must include all of the  
6 following:

7 (1) Allow paraprofessionals to enroll in a  
8 baccalaureate degree granting institution and enroll in  
9 courses that allow them to complete 30 college coursework  
10 credits toward a baccalaureate degree that would meet  
11 Illinois teacher-licensing standards.

12 (2) Allow paraprofessionals to earn 30 college  
13 coursework credits for the work that they perform in their  
14 role as a paraprofessional educator at a public elementary  
15 school or public secondary school.

16 (3) To use online course options to reduce costs and  
17 required travel.

18 (4) Evaluations by the mentor teacher of the  
19 paraprofessional must be included for the approval of the  
20 30 hours of credits earned teaching the in classroom.

21 (5) The participating elementary or secondary school  
22 must promise that they will consider hiring the  
23 paraprofessionals as full-time teachers after the  
24 paraprofessionals complete the Program.

25 (c) The curriculum of the Program shall be established by  
26 the university's educator preparation program. This curriculum

1 shall reflect the core components of the Program identified in  
2 subsection (b).

3 (d) The Program director may expand the participation of  
4 this Program if the director finds multiple willing and able  
5 schools and universities.

6 Section 25. Reporting.

7 (a) After the cohort of students complete the Program  
8 under Section 15, the State Board of Education and the Board of  
9 Higher Education must submit a report to the Governor, General  
10 Assembly, and the Legislative Reference Bureau detailing the  
11 impact of the Program on all of the following:

12 (1) Number of paraprofessionals that attained a  
13 baccalaureate degree.

14 (2) Successes and failures of the Program.

15 (3) Reducing the costs of attending an institution of  
16 higher learning and overall student loan debt for  
17 individuals pursuing a degree in teaching.

18 (4) Creating a model curriculum that can be replicated  
19 through partnerships between other institutions of higher  
20 learning and school districts across the State.

21 (b) The Program is dissolved on the day the State Board of  
22 Education and the Board of Higher Education submit the report  
23 required under subsection (a).

24 Section 30. Repeal. On the date that the Legislative

1 Reference Bureau receives the report sent to it under  
2 subsection (a) of Section 25, the, this Act is repealed.

3 Section 90. Rules.

4 The State Board of Education and the Board of Higher  
5 Education must adopt rules to implement this Act.

6 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
7 becoming law.