

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 the  
5 Illinois Graduate and Retain Our Workforce (iGROW) Act.

6 Section 5. The State Finance Act is amended by adding  
7 Section 5.990 as follows:

8 (30 ILCS 105/5.990 new)

9 Sec. 5.990. The Illinois Graduate and Retain Our Workforce  
10 (iGROW) Fund.

11 Section 10. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is  
12 amended by adding Section 65.120 as follows:

13 (110 ILCS 947/65.120 new)

14 Sec. 65.120. iGROW scholarship program.

15 (a) As used in this Section:

16 "Eligible applicant" means a student who has graduated  
17 from high school or has received a State of Illinois High  
18 School Diploma, who has maintained a cumulative grade point  
19 average of no less than 2.5 on a 4.0 scale, who is pursuing or  
20 intends to pursue a qualifying degree in a qualified

1 institution, and who is entitled to apply for assistance under  
2 this Act.

3 "Full-time" means the number of credit hours the  
4 Commission determines is full-time enrollment for a student  
5 for purposes of the program.

6 "Minority student" has the same meaning as the term is  
7 defined under Section 50 of the Higher Education Student  
8 Assistance Act (110 ILCS 947).

9 "Program" means the iGROW program created by this Act.

10 "Qualifying degree" means an associate or a bachelor's  
11 degree granted by a qualified institution that qualifies an  
12 individual to work in a qualifying job, as determined by the  
13 Commission.

14 "Qualifying job" means a job selected by the Commission  
15 (i) for which a recipient of an award under this Act is  
16 pursuing a qualifying degree, (ii) for which the recipient has  
17 completed a qualifying degree, or (iii) in which the recipient  
18 is working.

19 "Qualified student" means a person (i) who is a resident  
20 of this State; (ii) who, as an eligible applicant, has made a  
21 timely application for an iGROW scholarship under this  
22 Section; (iii) who is enrolled on at least a half-time basis at  
23 a qualified institution; (iv) who is enrolled in a course of  
24 study approved by the Commission, which includes, but is not  
25 limited to (1) computer and information sciences; (2)  
26 information technology; (3) information science; (4) computer

1 science; (5) computer systems networking and  
2 telecommunications; (6) computer and information systems  
3 security or information assurance; (7) management information  
4 systems; or (8) any other similarly designed college majors as  
5 determined acceptable by the Commission, (v) who maintains a  
6 grade point average of no less than 2.5 on a 4.0 scale; and  
7 (vi) who continues to advance satisfactorily toward the  
8 attainment of a degree.

9 "Recipient" means an Illinois resident enrolled in a  
10 qualified institution who receives an award under this Act.

11 (b) Subject to appropriation, and no sooner than the  
12 2024-2025 academic year, there is established the Illinois  
13 Graduate and Retain Our Workforce (iGROW) Scholarship Program  
14 to recruit and train individuals to work in technology jobs  
15 that have a high demand for new employees and offer high wages  
16 by awarding scholarships.

17 (c) Each iGROW scholarship awarded under this Section  
18 shall be determined by the Commission in an amount up to and  
19 including the full costs of tuition and fees and room and board  
20 of the qualified institution at which the recipient is  
21 enrolled if the institution is public, or an equivalent rate  
22 established by the Commission for private institutions. The  
23 total amount of iGROW scholarship assistance awarded by the  
24 Commission under this Section to an eligible applicant in any  
25 given fiscal year, when added to other financial assistance  
26 awarded to that individual for that year, shall not exceed the

1 cost of attendance at the institution at which the student is  
2 enrolled. If the amount of iGROW scholarship to be awarded to a  
3 qualified student exceeds the cost of attendance at the  
4 institution at which the student is enrolled, the iGROW  
5 scholarship shall be reduced by an amount equal to the amount  
6 by which the combined financial assistance available to the  
7 student exceeds the cost of attendance.

8 (d) The maximum number of academic terms for which a  
9 qualified student can receive iGROW scholarship assistance  
10 shall be 8 semesters or 12 quarters.

11 (e) All applications for scholarships awarded under this  
12 Section shall be made to the Commission on forms which the  
13 Commission shall provide for eligible applicants. The form of  
14 applications and the information required to be set forth  
15 therein shall be determined by the Commission, and the  
16 Commission shall require eligible applicants to submit with  
17 their applications such supporting documents or  
18 recommendations as the Commission deems necessary.

19 (f) Subject to appropriation for such purposes, payment of  
20 any iGROW scholarship awarded under this Section shall be  
21 determined by the Commission. All scholarship funds  
22 distributed in accordance with this subsection shall be paid  
23 to the qualified institution and used only for payment of the  
24 tuition and fees assessed by the institution and the standard  
25 housing and food allowance used for all undergraduate students  
26 by the qualified student in connection with his or her

1 attendance at a qualified institution. Any iGROW scholarship  
2 awarded under this Section shall be applicable to 2 semesters  
3 or 3 quarters of enrollment annually. The qualified  
4 institution can only request payment for tuition and fees up  
5 to the amount of actual tuition and fee expenses incurred. If a  
6 student withdraws after the expiration of the tuition refund  
7 or withdrawal adjustment period, the student may receive  
8 payment for tuition and fees incurred up to the term award. The  
9 housing and food allowance will be prorated based on the  
10 qualified institution's return of funds policy.

11 (g) Prior to receiving scholarship assistance for any  
12 academic year, each recipient of a iGROW scholarship awarded  
13 under this Section shall be required by the Commission to sign  
14 an agreement under which the recipient pledges that the  
15 recipient (i) shall work in the State in a qualified job for a  
16 period of not less than one year for each year of scholarship  
17 assistance he or she was awarded under this Section; however,  
18 in no event shall he or she agree to work in the State in a  
19 qualified job for a period of less than two years; (ii) shall  
20 work with an employer in the State performing work that is  
21 related to the field of study which qualified the candidate  
22 for scholarship assistance under this Act; and (iii) shall,  
23 upon request by the Commission, provide the Commission with  
24 evidence that he or she is fulfilling or has fulfilled the  
25 terms of the agreement provided for in this subsection. If a  
26 recipient of an iGROW scholarship awarded under this Section

1 fails to fulfill the obligations set forth in this subsection,  
2 the Commission shall require the recipient to repay the amount  
3 of the scholarships received, prorated according to the  
4 fraction of the employment obligation not completed, at a rate  
5 of interest equal to 5%, and, if applicable, reasonable  
6 collection fees. The Commission is authorized to establish  
7 rules relating to its collection activities for repayment of  
8 scholarships under this Section. All repayments collected  
9 under this Section shall be forwarded to the State Comptroller  
10 for deposit into the State's General Revenue Fund. A recipient  
11 of an iGROW scholarship shall not be considered in violation  
12 of the agreement entered into pursuant to this subsection if  
13 the recipient (i) enrolls on a full-time basis as a graduate  
14 student in a course of study related to the technology degree  
15 for which he qualified for the iGROW scholarship at a  
16 qualified institution; (ii) is serving, not in excess of 3  
17 years, as a member of the armed services of the United States;  
18 (iii) is a person with a temporary total disability for a  
19 period of time not to exceed 3 years as established by sworn  
20 affidavit of a qualified physician; (iv) is seeking and unable  
21 to find full-time employment with a State employer that  
22 satisfies the criteria set forth in this subsection and is  
23 able to provide evidence of that fact; (v) becomes a person  
24 with a permanent total disability as established by sworn  
25 affidavit of a qualified physician; or (viii) meets any other  
26 criteria that the Commission may deem necessary.

1       (h) Scholarship recipients under this Section who withdraw  
2 from a program of computer science or other related major area  
3 of study but remain enrolled in school to continue their  
4 postsecondary studies in another academic discipline shall not  
5 be required to commence repayment of their iGROW scholarship  
6 so long as they remain enrolled in school on a full-time basis  
7 or if they can document for the Commission special  
8 circumstances that warrant extension of repayment.

9       (i) If the iGROW scholarship program does not expend at  
10 least 90% of the amount appropriated for the program in a given  
11 fiscal year for 3 consecutive fiscal years on or before  
12 January 1 in each of those fiscal years, then up to 3% of  
13 amount appropriated for the program for each of next 3 fiscal  
14 years shall be allocated to increasing awareness of the  
15 program. The Commission shall make a recommendation to the  
16 General Assembly by February 1 of the year immediately  
17 following the end of that third fiscal year regarding whether  
18 the amount allocated to increasing awareness should continue.

19       (j) The Commission shall administer the iGROW scholarship  
20 program established by this Section and shall make all  
21 necessary and proper rules not inconsistent with this Section  
22 for its effective implementation.

23       (k) The Commission shall establish a methodology for  
24 prioritizing applications from applicants who demonstrate a  
25 financial need or hardship, applications from minority  
26 students, and applications from applicants demonstrating

1 academic excellence.

2 (l) Each fiscal year, the Commission may use up to 5% of  
3 money appropriated for the iGROW scholarship program for  
4 administration.

5 (m) Scholarships may be made under this Section through  
6 the 2029-30 academic year.

7 (n) The Illinois Graduate and Retain Our Workforce (iGROW)  
8 Fund is created as a special fund in the State treasury. Moneys  
9 in the fund may come from both public or institutional,  
10 organizational, or other private entities. All money in the  
11 Fund shall be used, subject to appropriation, by the Illinois  
12 Student Assistance Commission to implement and administer the  
13 program pursuant to this Section.

14 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect January  
15 1, 2024.