



103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

HB4787

Introduced 2/6/2024, by Rep. Amy L. Grant

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Paraprofessional Fast Track to Teaching Degree Pilot Program Act. Makes findings. Provides that the Paraprofessional Fast Track 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 educator 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 2024-2025 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 Board 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 Program. 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, the General Assembly, and the Legislative Reference Bureau detailing the impact of the Program and then the Program is dissolved and the Act is repealed. Effective immediately.

LRB103 36274 RJT 66371 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 makes all of the
8 following findings:

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

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

23 (3) School districts have strongly voiced their need

1 for more qualified teachers.

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

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

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

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

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

24 "Paraprofessional" or "paraprofessional educator" means a
25 person who holds a paraprofessional educator endorsement in

1 accordance with the School Code.

2 "Program" means the Paraprofessional Fast Track to
3 Teaching Degree Pilot Program.

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

11 Section 20. Program requirements.

12 (a) Subject to appropriation, beginning with the 2024-2025
13 academic year or, if funds are not appropriated for the
14 Program that academic year, beginning with the academic year
15 in which funds are appropriated for the Program, the State
16 Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education shall
17 coordinate with each other to assign a qualified individual to
18 serve as a Program director to develop the curriculum for the
19 Program. If a source of outside funding for the Program
20 director is secured to support the development of the Program,
21 the State Board of Education and Board of Higher Education
22 shall facilitate the approval of a paraprofessional-to-teacher
23 bachelor's degree curriculum pathway for the public
24 universities agreeing to participate in the 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) Allowing paraprofessionals to enroll in the public
8 university and enroll in courses that allow them to
9 complete 30 college coursework credits toward a
10 baccalaureate degree that would meet Illinois
11 teacher-licensing standards.

12 (2) Allowing 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) Using online course options to reduce costs and
17 required travel.

18 (4) The inclusion of evaluations by the mentor teacher
19 of the paraprofessional for the approval of the 30 college
20 coursework credits earned teaching in the classroom.

21 (5) A promise by the participating elementary or
22 secondary school that it 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 public university's educator preparation program. This

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

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

6 Section 25. Reporting.

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

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

14 (2) The 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, this Act is repealed.

3 Section 90. Rules. The State Board of Education and the
4 Board of Higher Education must adopt rules to implement this
5 Act.

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