

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 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is  
5 amended by changing Section 62 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/62)

7 Sec. 62. Grants for exonerated persons.

8 (a) In this Section:

9 "Dependent" means any spouse, natural child, legally  
10 adopted child, or child in the legal custody of an individual.

11 "Exonerated person" means an individual who has received a  
12 pardon from the Governor of the State of Illinois stating that  
13 such a pardon is issued on the grounds of innocence of the  
14 crime for which he or she was imprisoned or an individual who  
15 has received a certificate of innocence from a circuit court  
16 pursuant to Section 2-702 of the Code of Civil Procedure.

17 "Satisfactory academic progress" means the qualified  
18 applicant's maintenance of minimum standards of academic  
19 performance, consistent with requirements for maintaining  
20 federal financial aid eligibility, as determined by the  
21 institution of higher learning.

22 (b) Subject to a separate appropriation for this purpose,  
23 the Commission shall, each year, receive and consider

1 applications for grant assistance under this Section.  
2 Recipients of grants issued by the Commission in accordance  
3 with this Section must be exonerated persons or, as described  
4 in subsection (c-1) of this Section, their dependents.

5 Provided that the recipient is maintaining satisfactory  
6 academic progress, the funds from the grant may be used to pay  
7 up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters of full payment of tuition and  
8 mandatory fees at any public university or public community  
9 college located in this State for either full or part-time  
10 study. This benefit may be used for undergraduate or graduate  
11 study.

12 In addition, an exonerated person or, as described in  
13 subsection (c-1) of this Section, a dependent who has not yet  
14 received a high school diploma or a State of Illinois High  
15 School Diploma and completes a high school equivalency  
16 preparation course through an Illinois Community College  
17 Board-approved provider may use grant funds to pay costs  
18 associated with obtaining a State of Illinois High School  
19 Diploma, including payment of the cost of the high school  
20 equivalency test and up to one retest on each test module, and  
21 any additional fees that may be required in order to obtain a  
22 State of Illinois High School Diploma or an official  
23 transcript of test scores after successful completion of the  
24 high school equivalency test.

25 (c) An applicant for a grant under this Section need not  
26 demonstrate financial need to qualify for the benefits and

1 need not be an resident of the State at the time of enrollment.

2 (c-1) Beginning no later than the 2024-2025 academic year,  
3 if an exonerated person has been found by the Commission to  
4 qualify for a grant under this Section, and that person has not  
5 yet exhausted his or her eligibility for assistance described  
6 in subsection (b), the exonerated person may designate one or  
7 more dependents to use any unexpended portion of the  
8 exonerated person's eligibility, up to the total benefit for  
9 which the exonerated person is eligible. The combined benefits  
10 used by the exonerated person and any designated dependents  
11 may not exceed the total benefit for which the exonerated  
12 person is eligible. If funding is insufficient to serve all  
13 applicants, the Commission may prioritize applicants who have  
14 been exonerated over applicants who are dependents of  
15 exonerated individuals.

16 (d) The Commission may adopt any rules necessary to  
17 implement and administer this Section.

18 (Source: P.A. 102-1100, eff. 1-1-23.)