



September 27, 2024

The Honorable JB Pritzker
Governor
555 W. Monroe St., 16th Floor
Chicago, IL 60661

The Honorable Don Harmon
President of the Senate
309-G Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

The Honorable Emanuel "Chris" Welch
Speaker of the House
300 Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

The Honorable John F. Curran
Senate Republican Leader
110-D Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

The Honorable Tony McCombie
House Republican Leader
316 Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

The Higher Education Student Assistance Act requires the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) to administer the Aspirational Institutional Match Helping Illinois Grow Higher Education (AIM HIGH) Grant Program, and to report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the Program after each academic year (through the original sunset of the Pilot – October 1, 2024). The public universities were charged with designing and implementing their individual AIM HIGH program(s) on their campuses and reporting to ISAC each year on a number of program elements. These elements include actual spending, number of grants and grant amounts, student-level recipient demographic characteristics, and a statement of impact on the program.

AIM HIGH was signed into law in August 2018, and beginning with the 2019-20 academic year, provided merit-based, means-tested student financial aid to undergraduate students at the 12 Illinois public four-year universities. Recipients must be a resident of Illinois and are required to meet other basic, statewide program requirements, as well as any other program requirements specified by their schools. In the fifth year of the program, academic year 2023-24, about \$59.1 million was awarded to 14,490 Illinois undergraduate students at the 12 Illinois public four-year universities. Nearly 60 percent of all AIM HIGH recipients had family incomes of \$75,000 or less, and the race/ethnicity breakdown of AIM HIGH recipients looked a lot like the overall Illinois public university undergraduate breakdown. Consistent with the goals described by the program's legislative architects, seventy-five percent of public universities reported that AIM HIGH has been important in recruiting/attracting students as well as increasing enrollments, that AIM HIGH had a positive impact on student affordability, and/or that AIM HIGH supported long-term success or improved student retention/persistence. Another seven of the 12 schools reported that AIM HIGH allowed scholarship expansion that assisted with recruitment of new (or more) students they would like to attract.

Should you wish to discuss the information provided, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 847.831.8379 or Katharine Gricevich, Director of Government Relations, at 217.785.9278.

Sincerely,

Eric Zarnikow
Executive Director