

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The Children and Family Services Act is amended by adding Section 44 as follows:

(20 ILCS 505/44 new)

Sec. 44. Pat McGuire Child Welfare Education Fellowship Pilot Program.

(a) The General Assembly makes all of the following findings:

(1) The Department of Children and Family Services is the sole State agency for the planning and coordination of programs and services for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. The Department also provides social services to children and their families, operates children's institutions, and provides certain other rehabilitative and residential services. The Department contracts with many purchase of service agencies for the administration of these programs.

(2) Due to numerous factors, including the rate of pay, purchase of service agencies have a high employee turnover rate and struggle to maintain consistent employment levels. This high turnover is disruptive to the

delivery of direct child welfare services to families and youth in care.

(3) A number of public institutions of higher education in this State offer child welfare social work programs that are designed to train and prepare students for employment in the child welfare social work field, including, but not limited to, employment at purchase of service agencies that provide direct child welfare services to families and youth in care.

(4) The Department and public institutions of higher education have a mutual interest in providing greater access to child welfare social work education for a professional workforce that is responsive to the work of the Department through purchase of service agencies.

(b) As used in this Section:

"Department" means the Department of Children and Family Services.

"Direct service" means a position in foster care services, intact services, foster care licensing, adoption, or permanency or a supervisory position in the practice area.

"Eligible applicant" means a student who is enrolled in a social work program of study at a participating institution of higher education and who meets all of the qualifications as determined by the Department.

"Participating institution" means a public university in this State that is a party to an intergovernmental agreement

entered into with the Department in order to participate in the program established under this Section.

"Tuition, university fees, and books" includes the customary charge for instruction and books or course material and the additional fixed fees charged for specified purposes that are required generally of students who are not program applicants under this Section for each academic year for which a program applicant under this Section actually enrolls, but does not include room and board, transportation fees, fees payable only once, breakage fees, and other contingent deposits that are refundable in whole or in part. The Department may adopt, by rule not inconsistent with this Section, detailed provisions concerning the computation of tuition, university fees, and books.

(c) Beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year and continuing for a period of 6 academic years, the Department shall establish and administer the Pat McGuire Child Welfare Education Fellowship Pilot Program to provide financial assistance to eligible students who commit to seek and maintain employment at a purchase of service agency that contracts with the Department upon graduation from a participating institution with a degree in social work. The goal of the program is to develop and support an effective and stable direct service child welfare workforce. Pursuant to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, each participating institution shall enter into and adhere to all of the

provisions of an intergovernmental agreement between the Department and the participating institution. Subject to appropriation, the stipend program shall be available to eligible applicants in this State pursuing either a Bachelor of Social Work or a Master of Social Work degree at a participating institution. The Department may award a stipend of up to \$10,000 each academic year for a maximum of 2 academic years, up to a maximum total of \$20,000 in stipends for the 2 academic years combined, to a student under this Section if the participating institution and the Department find that the applicant meets all criteria established by the Department.

(d) Each participating institution and the Department shall determine renewal criteria for assistance consistent with the requirements of this Section.

(e) Each participating institution shall post on its Internet website the criteria and eligibility requirements to receive a stipend award of funds under this Section and must identify that the stipend awards are up to a maximum of \$10,000 per student per academic year for a maximum of 2 academic years, with the total amount of stipends awarded to an eligible applicant or student not to exceed \$20,000 for the duration of the eligible applicant's or student's participation in the program. This information must also be reported to the Department and the Board of Higher Education, and the Department and the Board shall post the information on their respective Internet websites.

(f) Prior to receiving a stipend for any academic year, an eligible applicant under this Section shall be required by the participating institution to sign an agreement with the Department under which the stipend recipient pledges that, within 6 months from the date of the stipend recipient's graduation from the participating institution with a Bachelor of Social Work or a Master of Social Work degree for which stipend funds were paid by the Department, the stipend recipient must search for, apply to, and accept full-time employment in a direct service position at a Department purchase of service agency located anywhere in this State. The stipend recipient must remain as a full-time employee in a direct service position at a Department purchase of service agency located anywhere in this State for at least 18 months for each academic year the stipend recipient received a stipend from the Department under the program.

(g) If the recipient of a stipend award under this Section fails to search for, apply to, and accept full-time employment in a direct service position at a Department purchase of service agency located anywhere in this State within 6 months following the stipend recipient's graduation from a social work program at a participating institution, the Department shall require the stipend recipient to begin to repay the total amount of the stipend received within 90 calendar days after the end of the 6-month period or as agreed to by the Department. The repayment amount shall be prorated according

to the fraction of the employment obligation not completed, at a rate of interest equal to 5%, and, if applicable, reasonable attorney's and collection fees. All repayments collected under this Section shall be forwarded to the State Comptroller for deposit into the fund from which the stipend awards were paid.

(h) A stipend recipient under this Section must immediately notify the participating institution and the Department of any changes to the stipend recipient's enrollment status or if the stipend recipient withdraws from the social work program for which the recipient was awarded a stipend under the program.

(i) If a stipend recipient's qualified employment is terminated for any reason other than for cause, a stipend recipient must search for, apply to, and accept new, qualified, full-time employment in a direct service position at a Department purchase of service agency located anywhere in this State within 90 calendar days from the stipend recipient's termination of full-time employment, otherwise the stipend recipient is subject to the repayment of stipend funds to the Department.

(j) If a stipend recipient's qualified employment is terminated for cause prior to the completion of the program's employment requirement, the stipend recipient shall repay the total amount of stipends received under the program within 90 calendar days from termination or as agreed to by the Department. The amount of repayment owed by the recipient

shall be prorated based on the amount of the employment requirement that has been satisfied.

(k) On or before October 1, 2023 and each October 1 thereafter during the Pat McGuire Child Welfare Education Fellowship Pilot Program, the Department shall provide a report and evaluation of the results of the program at each participating institution to the General Assembly and the Office of the Governor. Each participating institution shall track a student's eligibility under the program, the completion of educational requirements, the costs of each student's tuition, university fees, and books, and the application of the recipient's stipends during the recipient's enrollment at the participating institution. The report shall also include the location in this State where each stipend recipient was hired and shall identify the purchase of service agency, the duration of the recipient's employment, and the termination date of the recipient's employment.

(l) The sharing and reporting of student data under subsection (k) shall be in accordance with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and the Illinois School Student Records Act. All parties under this Section must preserve the confidentiality of information as required by law. The names of stipend recipients under this Section are not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

(m) The Department is authorized to adopt rules to

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implement and administer this Section.

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1, 2021.