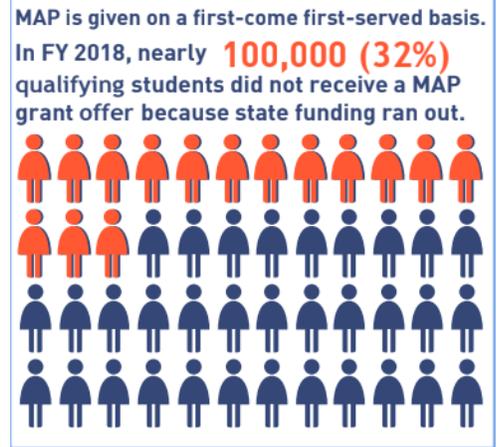


## SUMMARY

### Higher Education:

1. **Boost degrees and enrollment** by expanding MAP grants by \$100 million. This would allow approximately 33,000 more students to enroll in college.
2. **Expand college access** by
  - a. Banning the box in the college admissions process, following the University of Illinois' example,
  - b. Setting equitable, binding statewide college attainment targets
3. **Strengthen academic success and support systems** by
  - a. Creating college completion innovation grants that enable colleges to implement best practices with improving college completion rates, including providing emergency grants to students and intrusive counseling.
  - b. Notifying student parents of funding to offset the cost of child care.



### Employment:

4. **Create debt-free pathways to careers by expanding equitable apprenticeships**
  - a. Collect data on apprenticeship programs, tracking programs' reach with women and people of color and create inclusion targets for reaching disenfranchised populations.
  - b. Create an ongoing flexible funding stream committed to workforce development programming, including apprenticeship programs.
  - c. Improve information admissions and counseling offices provide high school and prospective college students on apprenticeship programs.

Illinois Apprenticeships by Gender, 2017



Source: The Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS)

**Results have shown that across all types of campuses, students with mental health problems were**



**AS LIKELY TO LEAVE AN INSTITUTION WITHOUT GRADUATING, IMPACTING ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND FUTURE EARNING POTENTIAL.**

### Health:

5. **Boost college completion rates by investing in campus-based mental health**

## HIGHER EDUCATION

Illinois' higher education system is in crisis. After over a decade of state funding cuts, the state has the fifth highest tuition for public universities in the country.<sup>1</sup> As a result, 73 percent of colleges are not affordable for Illinois' students.<sup>2</sup> State disinvestment has resulted in families bearing more of the burden of paying for college, and a wide and growing equity-based completion gap.<sup>3</sup> African-American student enrollment dropped by over 25 percent between 2013 and 2017,<sup>4</sup> and the higher education attainment gap between Latinx students and whites is 27 percentage points.<sup>5</sup> Illinois must reverse this trend in order to meet its goal of 60 percent of Illinois' adults holding a postsecondary degree or credential by 2025.<sup>6</sup>

### *Expand need-based aid rather than merit aid*

The cost of attending college is one of the top reasons students do not attend college;<sup>7</sup> a disconcerting trend in Illinois where there is an affordability gap of \$8,271.<sup>8</sup> This is the amount of additional money students in Illinois need to secure to cover the cost of attending college after taking into account grants, scholarships, and tuition waivers and what a student would earn working 10 hours per week.<sup>9</sup> Illinois has offset this high tuition through the state's need-based aid program (Monetary Award Program or MAP grants) that ensured low-income families had access. The MAP program serves high-need, underrepresented populations: 56 percent are first-generation college students and the average annual family income is \$34,673.<sup>10</sup> MAP Grants are effective with MAP recipients graduating college at about the same rate as their peers at the same institutions.<sup>11</sup>

If Illinois wants to create a generation prepared for the jobs of today and tomorrow, the answer is simple: invest in MAP grants. For low-income families, college is out of reach without substantial financial aid. Illinois expanded MAP grants by \$50 million last session and Governor Pritzker has proposed raising the budget by an additional \$50 million this year. These are critical steps, yet more is needed. The biggest challenge facing MAP is the program is underfunded, not reaching nearly 100,000 of those who are eligible<sup>12</sup> and covering 31 percent of the cost at public universities.<sup>13</sup> This means over 97,000 eligible students are going without aid.<sup>14</sup> MAP must cover all eligible students, not just those who file their FAFSA before funding. To cover all students, Illinois needs a multi-year plan to reach all eligible students. That should start with a \$100 million increase over last year's appropriation. While Illinois faces steep financial constraints, the state could minimize or cut funding for merit aid (AIM HIGH) and re-appropriate the money to MAP grants.

### *Increase Access for Individuals Seeking a Better Future*

Through a revenue neutral measure, Illinois could boost access to college for young adults' with a criminal history and thereby enable more young adults to secure the schooling they need to access high-quality jobs. Some colleges in Illinois consider criminal history in the college admissions process, which is unnecessary as research reveals there is no connection between campus safety and admitting students with a criminal history.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, greater educational attainment reduces recidivism, by boosting employability.<sup>16</sup> With 4.1 million people in Illinois having an arrest or conviction record, we are leaving a significant part of our state's population without a meaningful pathway to employment.<sup>17</sup> Illinois should ban the box in the college admissions process, not asking applicants about their arrest, criminal conviction, or other aspects of their disciplinary history as applicants apply. Colleges should instead only reviewing applicants criminal history after making an admissions decision in order to make appropriate accommodations if needed. This revenue-neutral bill would allow more young adults to further contribute to our economy by helping them earn the degrees necessary to succeed in today's economy.

### ***Equitable, Binding College Attainment Targets***

Illinois is updating the state's attainment targets, creating targets disaggregated by race that align to the state's goal of 60 percent of residents holding a postsecondary certificate by 2025. This shift is commendable as it creates targets for student body populations who may otherwise go overlooked. It is also timely, given Illinois' large and growing race-based college completion gap. Illinois' new attainment targets should require full equity, creating a target for fully closing the college completion gap between whites and people of color. Furthermore, Illinois should create a binding action plan for closing the college attainment gap, with milestones that build up to fully achieving an equitable attainment target. While Illinois has created an action agenda, the Public Agenda for Illinois Higher Education, this plan is non-binding. Illinois higher education boards should annually release a report tracking the state's progress on reaching the state's attainment targets as well as each campus' success. The legislature should align funding to enable all colleges to fully support and align with Illinois' attainment targets.

### ***Build a Student Success Program***

Illinois has a wide and worsening college completion gap. The attainment gap between African Americans and whites is 18 percent and 27 percent between Hispanic-Latinx and whites.<sup>18</sup> Yet, Illinois lacks a binding plan to close this college success gap. Illinois should begin closing the college completion gap by creating student success programs like at Georgia State University and City University of New York's (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). Georgia State University increased graduation rates by 22 percentage points in ten years while cutting overall spending per student through a suite of supports for students,<sup>19</sup> and CUNY nearly doubled the college graduation rate for participants of the ASAP program.<sup>20</sup> Elements of both initiatives include providing not only financial support but also providing the wide range of personal, academic, and financial resources students need to complete school.<sup>21</sup> Georgia State also created a tracking system to ensure student advisors are reaching students just as they are starting to struggle.<sup>22</sup> Illinois should create a pilot program that reaches 10,000 students in its first year. Given that the CUNY ASAP program costs around \$3,440 per person,<sup>23</sup> a program at this scale would cost Illinois around \$34.4 million a year.

## *Notify student parents of child care resources*

Illinois has 97,000 students who are parents.<sup>24</sup> These students are committed to working hard, yet not receiving the supports they need to succeed. Student parents are more likely to have a 3.5+ GPA than dependent students, yet less likely to graduate. Just 8% of single mothers earn a degree, compared with nearly 1/2 of women without children.<sup>25</sup> This impacts our economy: single mothers with only a high school degree are more than three times as likely to live in poverty as single mothers with bachelor's degrees.<sup>26</sup> In Young Invincibles' conversations with student parents, we have found that students are struggling to secure the resources they need (such as child care) and often unable to get answers from a range of offices on their campuses. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) review of 62 colleges found that only one-third of colleges advertised federal aid (dependent care allowance) that enables some student parents to access more financial aid.<sup>27</sup> In the one-third of colleges that shared information on the dependent care allowance, the information ranged from sharing the program existed to instructions on how to request the allowance.<sup>28</sup> Colleges should notify students with dependents that they may be eligible for resources to support child care and related costs when issuing financial aid award letters.

## **WORKFORCE**

Illinois' record-low unemployment figures mask a stark reality: the economic outlook for many groups that have faced discrimination and disinvestment is still bleak.<sup>29</sup> For Illinois' young adults, the statistics are particularly alarming. The state's youth unemployment rate was almost 16 times higher than it was for adults<sup>30</sup> and a staggering 33.8% of African-Americans aged 20-24 are both unemployed and out of work.<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to the stereotypical images of spoiled Millennials and Generation Zers, young adults often have pressing financial obligations that require access to quality jobs.<sup>32</sup> Securing living-wage positions often necessitate some form of postsecondary education, but the state's rising tuition costs leave college inaccessible to many. Apprenticeships offer one remedy for the post-secondary predicament that faces many young adults by offering opportunities for jobseekers to build professional networks and earn money while they acquire skills for in-demand, family-sustaining occupations.

## *Collect Data to Inform Equitable Expansion of Apprenticeships*

Illinois apprenticeships are inequitable. Only four percent of registered apprentices are women and 27 percent are people of color.<sup>33</sup> In order to overcome this, Illinois needs to set inclusion targets for reaching women and people of color as recommended by the *Illinois Department of Commerce's Action Agenda for Workforce Development and Job Creation*.<sup>34</sup> We have a great opportunity with the passage of the Apprenticeship Study Act (SB 2024) in 2019. The Apprenticeship Study Act, pushed by YI and our partners, mandates that the Illinois Department of Commerce complete a study that identifies a range of data points including the sectors that hold promise for attracting diverse candidates. YI will work with state agency partners to monitor the execution of

the Study Act and use the report findings to develop data-informed, regional apprenticeship enrollment and completion targets by race and gender. These targets will provide decision-makers and apprenticeship navigators and intermediaries with ambitious but realistic goals that will ensure apprenticeship programs reflect regional demographics.

### *Dedicate Ongoing Flexible Funding for Apprenticeships*

Although the federal government has demonstrated increased financial support for apprenticeship over the last decade, Illinois' state dedicated funding for work-based learning remains minimal. Young Invincibles has heard from providers that participant eligibility and programmatic restrictions in the federal grants that Illinois uses for apprenticeship and career preparatory programs further impede apprenticeship expansion efforts in the state.<sup>35</sup> To overcome insufficient and restrictive funding, Illinois needs ongoing funding that supports 1) apprenticeship technical assistance providers known as navigators and intermediaries; 2) a barrier reduction fund that provides wraparound supports to jobseekers facing multiple obstacles to employment and 3) pre-apprenticeship and preparatory programs that offer career guidance and academic upskilling to adults who have faced discrimination and diminished access to education and employment opportunities. With these three areas receiving state-dedicated funding, Illinois will move closer to ensuring all populations are able to thrive in apprenticeship.

### *Increasing Awareness of Apprenticeship as a Career Pathway*

Individuals who complete apprenticeship programs earn an average starting annual salary of \$50,000 and make \$300,000 more over the course of their career than do individuals with similar backgrounds who do not pursue apprenticeship.<sup>36</sup> As positive as apprenticeships' outcomes are for successful participants, data suggests that many young adults hold significant misconceptions about apprenticeships or are unaware of apprenticeship as a viable option for their academic and professional goals.<sup>37</sup> To overcome this knowledge gap, the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Community College Board should require students and prospective students receive reliable information on apprenticeship opportunities.

## **HEALTH**

Mental health issues are a pervasive and growing concern for young adults. In fact one third of college students are diagnosed with a mental health condition, an increase from 22 percent in the last decade.<sup>38</sup> Yet, young adults ages 18-25 are less likely to receive mental health support than any other age group.<sup>39</sup> College campuses can play a big role in addressing this challenge. Over 60 percent of Illinois high school graduates enroll in a postsecondary program shortly after graduation,<sup>40</sup> and a national survey found only 31 percent of students rated their campus as "supportive" with mental health issues.<sup>41</sup>

### *Campus-Based Mental Health*

With many mental health illnesses, including depression, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia, first hitting people in their early 20s, Illinois should expand students' access to campus-based mental health supports.<sup>42</sup> Illinois took a significant step forward by passing Public Act 101-2051, the Mental Health Early Action on Campus bill. The bill, among other things, increases campus staff capacity to support student mental health needs, expands peer supports, and establishes a technical assistance center to promote best practices. The Commission on Governmental Forecasting and Accountability surveyed most colleges in Illinois to generate a cost estimate for implementation and found the annual cost is around \$18 million to \$19.2 million annually. We call on the legislature to fully fund the act's implementation. In doing so, Illinois will boost college completion rates as students with mental health problems are twice as likely to drop out of college.<sup>43</sup>

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