



February 2, 2022

The Illinois Community College Trustees Association and the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents applaud Governor Pritzker and his administration for their planned investment in higher education through the FY 2023 budget, and support the proposed funding increases to operationalize strategies outlined in the collectively developed plan *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability and Growth*.

An unprecedented increase of \$122 million in MAP funding will ensure more equitable access to higher education for all Illinois residents. This increase will also enable MAP grants to cover a greater portion of students' tuition costs and expand funding eligibility to students pursuing short-term certificates or credentials in fields that meet essential workforce needs in our local communities, such as commercial driver's license (CDL) and certified nursing assistant (CNA) credentials.

Illinois community colleges stand ready to partner with the Governor's Office in the new and innovative Pipeline for the Advancement of the Healthcare (PATH) workforce program to support and expand opportunities for growing the nursing and healthcare worker pipeline. The \$25 million in funding will assist community colleges with enhancing programming and wrap-around services to recruit future healthcare workers, remove barriers to entry into healthcare fields for low-income, first generation and minority students, and develop career advancement pathways for incumbent healthcare workers. These steps are essential to addressing unprecedented healthcare worker shortages and provide a ready supply of future workers.

The ongoing pandemic combined with years of near stagnant funding have strained higher education budgets, programming and services. A five percent increase to community college operational funding, and the addition of supplemental funding opportunities, will further strengthen our local institutions while easing the financial burden on local taxpayers and students.

Collectively, the proposed investments in higher education will assist the state in closing historic equity gaps and improve student outcomes for underrepresented students group, while retaining Illinois residents and creating pathways for development of a skilled workforce in key areas of the labor force to support the state's business and industry.

Illinois community colleges are proud to work collaboratively with Governor Pritzker's administration and our legislative leaders to maintain Illinois' leadership as one of the most respected and progressive higher education systems in the nation, and we strongly support the proposed FY 2023 budget.