



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor JB Pritzker Announces Support for Community College Baccalaureate Degrees to Strengthen Illinois' Workforce

[Springfield, IL] – Today, Governor JB Pritzker announced support for new legislation—Senate Bill 2482 and House Bill 3717—that would allow Illinois community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees in high-demand fields. This initiative aims to expand access to affordable, flexible higher education options for working adults and address the state's growing workforce needs.

"Illinois has long been a leader in expanding educational opportunities and preparing our workforce for the jobs of tomorrow," said Governor JB Pritzker. "By allowing our community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees for in-demand career paths, we are making it easier and more affordable for students—particularly working adults in rural communities—to advance their careers while strengthening our state's economy."

The proposed legislation builds on the success of similar programs in 24 other states, including California, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, Washington, and Florida, where Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) programs have increased degree attainment in key industries.

"In this challenging time, higher education needs to be nimble and innovative. Other states have introduced community college baccalaureate programs to reduce costs for students and provide greater access. With all of Illinois' higher education institutions working together, we can provide high quality baccalaureate degrees to all students wanting to pursue one," said Senator Halpin.

"This is about access and opportunity," said State Representative Katz Muhl. "Seventy-eight percent of community college students work while in school, making relocation impractical. By allowing community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees, we're giving more Illinoisans a real chance at upward mobility while strengthening the local workforce. I'm proud to support this initiative that puts students and communities first."

Expanding Career Pathways and Access with Community College Baccalaureates

As Illinois industries face a growing demand for skilled workers with baccalaureate degrees, employers in Illinois have expressed a strong need for qualified candidates with baccalaureate degrees in their respective industries, supporting Community College Baccalaureate programs as a solution to bridge this gap.

"Expanding baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges increases access to affordable higher education, allowing more students to earn four-year degrees without the burden of excessive debt. This approach also helps meet workforce demands by equipping graduates with the skills needed in high-demand fields, ultimately strengthening local economies and communities," said Illinois Community College Board Executive Director Brian Durham.

"We are excited about the Governor's policy initiative to expand community college baccalaureate degrees, ensuring affordable, accessible pathways to high-demand jobs," said Jim Reed, Executive Director of Illinois Community College Trustee Association. "This is a vital step in meeting Illinois' workforce needs, and we welcome the opportunity to collaborate with public universities to expand access for students in local communities who might not otherwise pursue a bachelor's degree."

A recent survey of Illinois community college underscores the demand:

- **75%** would pursue a bachelor's if they could complete it at their community college.

"I want to pursue higher education, I am a bit older than my typical community college peers. I am 25 and will complete my Associate's Degree in Business Administration in the spring of 2025, at age 26," said an Illinois Community College Student.

"I work almost full-time with 5 classes right now. I worry about the cost of studying for my Bachelor's and how a university operates because I need something flexible if I'm working and in school."

"Community college students are deeply rooted in their local communities—they work here, raise families here, and contribute to the local economy," said Dr. Cornille, President of Heartland Community College. "By expanding community college baccalaureate programs, we're meeting students where they are and providing access to the education they need to succeed without having to leave their communities."

With **SB2482 and HB3717**, Illinois aligns with a national movement to make higher education more accessible, workforce-relevant, and responsive to the needs of today's students.

About the Supporting Organizations

The **Illinois Community College Board** is leading the effort to expand Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) programs in Illinois, with strong support from the **Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA)** and the **Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP)**. Together, these organizations represent Illinois' 45 community colleges—the nation's third-largest system and the state's leading public workforce trainer. Serving 600,000 residents annually through credit, noncredit, and continuing education courses, the Community Colleges of Illinois provide high-quality, affordable, and accessible education.

- **The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)** is the state coordinating organization for the Illinois Community College System.
- **The Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA)** advocates for policies that strengthen community colleges and expand opportunities for students. As the primary organization spearheading this initiative, ICCTA works closely with state legislators, education leaders, and industry partners to advance workforce-aligned degree pathways.
- **The Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP)** supports policies that enhance the role of community colleges in workforce development and economic mobility.

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