

# **Lt. Governor Sanguinetti urges support for Adult High School legislation and the creation of an Excel Center**

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ROCKFORD - Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti joined Representative Joe Sosnowski, Representative John Cabello, and Goodwill officials at the Northern Illinois Goodwill to highlight the importance of high school diploma attainability for adults, and the benefits an Excel Center would bring to Illinois.

This degree pathway program has proven successful in multiple other states, where adult graduates have been able to earn high school diplomas, career coursework, and achieve significantly higher wages. Implementation of a Rockford area Excel Center in partnership with Goodwill would help Illinois address educational disparities and spur economic growth.

“An educational opportunity during my childhood changed the course of my life for the better,” said Lt. Governor Sanguinetti. “Age should not limit a person’s ability to pursue an educational pathway toward success. The Excel Center program has the potential to change the lives of many adults in the Rockford area and I thank Representative Sosnowski for working with me on this legislation.”

Around 1 million Illinoisans lack a high school diploma or GED. According to figures reported by *Statistical Atlas* based on 2015 U.S. Census Data, 13 percent of Illinois adults aged 25 or older do not possess a high school diploma. In the Rockford Metro Region, 14 percent of adults are without a high school degree. Unfortunately, the data shows minority populations are disproportionately represented in not possessing high school equivalency credentials.

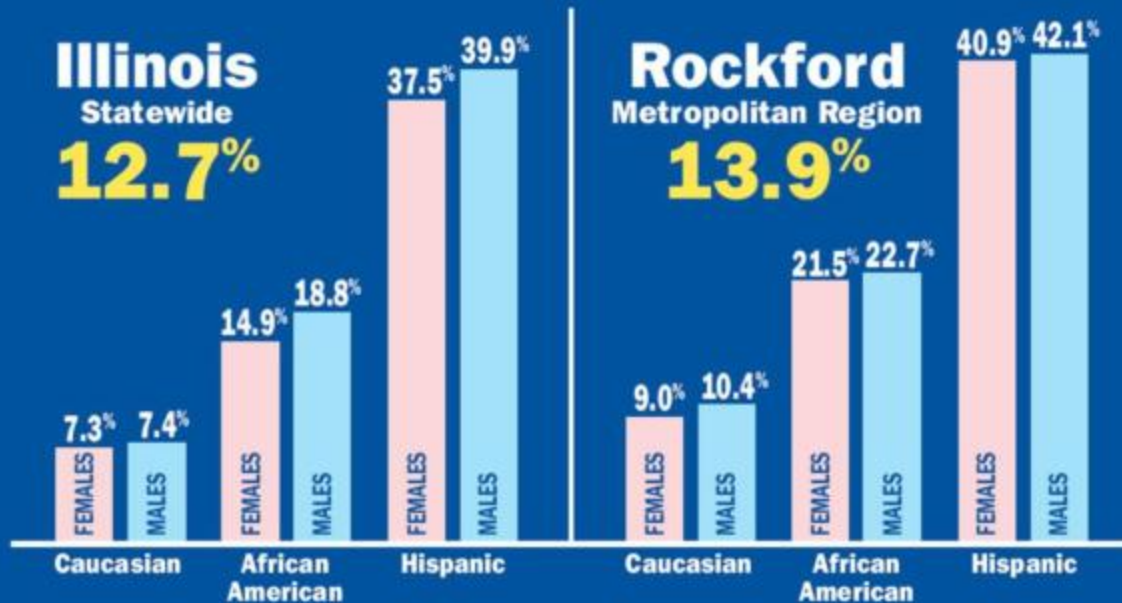
When the State of Indiana faced a similar problem in 2010, officials partnered with Goodwill to open the first Excel Center. In 2014, Ball State University researcher Dr. Michael Hicks found that “those who graduated saw wages of more than \$4,550 higher after graduation than the typical adult without a high school diploma.”

In order to bring the Excel Center model to Illinois, the Illinois School Code must be amended to remove the current age restriction that prevents adults over the age of 21 who did not finish high school, from receiving a high school diploma. Representative Sosnowski’s (R-Rockford) legislation, HB2527, would remove this barrier for approved nonprofit entities that are in a partnership with regional superintendents of schools. Additionally, it will call for an ongoing relationship among Goodwill, regional education offices, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois State Board of Education to help Rockford-area adults obtain a high school diploma.

“By eliminating the high school diploma age cap, we can give adult learners the ability to earn their degree and open up unlimited new doors of career opportunities for them. In the Rockford area alone, we have over 40,000 people without a high school diploma or GED,” said Rep Sosnowski. “This is a tragedy that we can proactively remedy by passing my bill into law. Every adult who wishes to complete their high school education should have the opportunity to do so; and the Excel Center has proven to be a premier example of how to achieve this shared goal.”

# HB 2527: Adult High School

Residents without a High School Degree



Source: Statistical Atlas, "Overview of the Rockford Area, Illinois," U.S. Census Bureau, 2015, <http://statisticalatlas.com/metro-area/illinois/Rockford/Overview>

Video of the event will be posted [here](#).

Graphic source: Statistical Atlas "Overview of the Rockford area, Illinois," US Census Bureau, 2015.