



# **ICCB Provides Nearly \$19 Million To Address Unemployment For African Americans In Illinois**

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ILLINOIS - The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) has granted \$18.7 million dollars to community colleges throughout Illinois to help address education and unemployment gaps in the African American and other minority communities. The funding will be used across 17 community colleges throughout the state that serve larger African American populations under Illinois' Workforce Equity Initiative, now in its second year.

“We know there is great demand for accelerated occupational training programs like the ones offered through the Workforce Equity Initiative. This money will support so many African American Illinoisans by not only providing free training programs that will turn into solid paying jobs but also by providing a wide range of wraparound services to address basic needs like childcare and transportation,” said ICCB Executive Director Brian Durham.

While the first year of the initiative was impacted by the current health crisis, demand remained high with 1,840 Illinoisans (78% African American) enrolling in the spring of 2020.

With the support of Illinois' Legislative Black Caucus and House Deputy Majority Leader Jehan Gordon-Booth, funding from the WEI allows participating colleges to develop or enhance training and career pathway programs in primarily five high demand employment sectors - health care, manufacturing and construction, transportation, information technology, and emergency services.

In 2021, the initiative is being expanded from 15 to 17 local colleges with new participants Kaskaskia College in Centralia and Richard J. Daley College in Chicago.

The development of the WEI Consortium was developed to address an Illinois Community College Board report, which found that minorities, particularly African Americans, were severely underrepresented among Career and Technical Education (CTE) program graduates.

According to the report, in 2019, minorities accounted for approximately one out of three, or 37%, of all CTE course completers and African Americans accounted for just one out of ten or 12%. The ICCB report highlighted the need to fund a targeted initiative that promotes workforce equity for minorities in high demand sectors.

Given the CTE programs provide opportunities in high demand areas to address skills gaps in the workforce, the WEI Consortium can play a pivotal role in increasing access to training and credentialing opportunities that lead to gainful employment for underrepresented populations.

For the full WEI report visit: <http://www.illinoiswei.org/>.