



# Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation Expanding Equity and Increasing Opportunity for Special Needs Students

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**CHICAGO** — Expanding equity and fairness for special needs students, Governor JB Pritzker signed HB 40 and HB 2748 into law, allowing special education students to continue attending school through the end of the school year in which they turn 22. The package also allows special needs students who recently turned 22 and were impacted by COVID-19 to remain eligible for educational services up to the end of the regular 2021-2022 school year.

“I strongly believe that a core principle of governance is ensuring that our laws are kind to the people they are meant to serve. And there’s nothing kind about taking a student with disabilities out of the classroom on October 16th, or January 5th, or April 19th, just because they turned another day older,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “It doesn’t happen to general education students, and it shouldn’t happen to our students with special needs either. In Illinois, it will never happen again. We all have something to celebrate today.”

“Students all across Illinois have faced significant challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially special education students who may be left unable to finish their school year,” Assistant Senator Majority Leader Dave Koehler (D-Peoria) said. “Students of all ages and abilities deserve the same opportunities when it comes to their education, and I am glad to see this legislation become law.”

“We are righting a long-standing wrong by allowing special education students to finish out their final year of school,” said State Senator Bill Cunningham, a Democrat who represents portions of Chicago and the southwest suburbs. “Starting this year, they will get to graduate with their classmates and say proper goodbyes to their friends and teachers.”

“Zoom classes were particularly difficult for this cohort of students and has left students and their families with even fewer options than they might have had with in person instruction,” said State Representative Suzanne Ness (D-Crystal Lake). “For these students, their final year is critical to helping them transition to whatever is next. This bill offers hope and support for these students and their families.”

“Every student deserves to be able to graduate with their class, enjoying the rite of passage that is saying goodbye to their friends and teachers at the end of the school year,” said State Representative Fran Hurley (D-Chicago). “This bill makes that possible for all special education students who call Illinois home.”

House Bill 40 will allow special education students to continue attending school through the end of the school year in which they turn 22, rather than leave school the day they turn 22. Under prior law, special education students aged out of eligibility on the day they turn 22, losing access to vital support services.

The legislation will allow students with disabilities to finish the school year and celebrate the well-deserved milestone of high school completion in the same way as their peers.

House Bill 2748 will allow special education students to remain eligible for services up to the end of the regular 2021-2022 school year if a student reached the age of 22 during the time in which the student's in-person instruction, services, or activities were suspended for a period of 3 months or more during the school year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This legislation will give students an opportunity to regain that critical in-person classroom instruction time and transition to adult special needs services.

HB 40 and HB 2748 are effective immediately.