

# Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislation Expanding Training And Education Opportunities For Working Families

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CHICAGO – Building on existing efforts to provide essential training and educational opportunities for the Illinois workforce, Governor JB Pritzker signed House Bill 645 into law. The legislation creates the Illinois Future of Work Task Force with the goal of

producing recommendations to expand workforce development, training, education, and apprenticeship programs. The bill passed both the House and Senate with unanimous bipartisan support.

Governor Pritzker will appoint seven members to join the Illinois Future of Work Task Force and six state agencies will have representation on the task force, including the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL), the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), the Department of Employment Security (IDES), the State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), and the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE).

“Even when times are hard, especially when times are hard, we have to invest in the things that lift up our communities. I’m proud to sign this bipartisan legislation into law today, establishing an additional resource that will help Illinois’ working men and women prepare for the jobs of tomorrow,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Through the Illinois Future of Work Task Force, the state will develop initiatives that can help return residents to the workforce or help already employed workers get the most out of their career.”

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pritzker administration launched multiple grant and funding opportunities to invest in communities across the state and create job opportunities for residents. The grant programs included a \$16.6 million investment to expand opportunities for Illinoisans who became unemployed during the pandemic and a Youth Summer Employment Program, on top of existing supports like federally funded workforce training programs offered at Illinois’ network of local workforce centers.

“Under Governor Pritzker’s leadership, DCEO is committed to investing in Illinois workers and embracing innovative training and development opportunities so that all Illinoisans have access to economic opportunity today and in the future,” said DCEO Acting Director Sylvia Garcia. “The Future of Work Task Force will help identify opportunities to reduce inequities and provide workers access to comprehensive training and credentials that will help them excel in the jobs and career paths our Illinois employers will be looking to fill well into the future.”

“Rapid advancements in technology, along with a changing climate, will impact our economy. Illinois has the infrastructure and natural resources to promote and foster business growth, as universities, community colleges and trade schools prepare the state’s diverse, future workforce for the changing demands of the economy. The Future of Work Task Force is necessary to connect industry leaders to work toward a common goal of making Illinois a better place to live and work,” said IDOL Director Michael Kleinik.

“IDES looks forward to providing labor market insight and will continue to work with Illinois employers to connect dislocated workers with employment opportunities that will shape the future of the Illinois economy,” said IDES Acting Director Kristen Richards.

“The needs of the state’s workforce are constantly changing, and the Illinois Future of Work Act will help us ensure our P-12 education system stays closely aligned with those needs – from soft skills like creative thinking to hard skills like coding,” said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. “I look forward to deepening our collaboration with our sister agencies and stakeholders to strengthen the state’s pathways toward high-paying jobs and opportunities for the future generation of leaders. The work of this task force will build on the Illinois State Board of Education’s existing efforts to ensure all of our students are college and career ready after high school graduation.”

“Illinois has some of the most robust job opportunities in the U.S. and it is imperative we continue to invest in training and education to fill those jobs. As Illinois’ largest workforce training provider, community colleges statewide understand the value of providing access and opportunities for Illinoisans to better their lives and contribute to a diverse number of industries throughout our state,” said Brian Durham, Executive Director of the Illinois Community College Board.

“We are pleased to be part of the Future of Work Task Force. The Illinois Board of Higher Education just approved a new strategic plan which recognizes that Illinois’ economic growth and educational equity are inseparable,” said IBHE Executive Director Ginger Ostro. “We need all of our students to be well-prepared for the careers of the future and this task force will make sure that we achieve that goal.”

“The future of work is now and working people across Illinois are counting on us to create an economy that works for everyone,” said State Senator Ram Villivalam (D-Chicago). “The Future of Work Act will continue to make Illinois a leader in building an equitable future for working families by establishing dignified standards of work, all while ensuring that existing and emerging industries continue to grow.”

“The residents of Illinois must be prepared for the demands of the innovative workforce of the future,” said Assistant House Majority Leader Marcus Evans, Jr. “As leaders, I believe that we must ensure that the regulations and policies of the future effectively promote job growth while protecting the working class. I’m proud to work alongside Gov. Pritzker and my colleague to make Illinois a workforce destination.”

Members of the task force must submit a full report with workforce recommendations to the General Assembly by May 1, 2022, after which, the task force will be dissolved.

HB 645 is effective immediately.