

Gov. Pritzker Signs Legislative Package Addressing Nationwide Teacher Shortage

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SPRINGFIELD – Continuing efforts to recruit new teachers and diversify the profession, Gov. JB Pritzker signed a series of bills into law to address the nationwide teacher shortage. The bills will simplify the licensing process for educators, lower licensing fees, and create more opportunities for prospective educators.

These initiatives build on Gov. Pritzker's record of addressing the burden of the state's current teacher shortage, which includes raising the minimum wage for teachers to \$40,000 per year, increasing funding for the Minority Teachers of Illinois scholarship

program by 120%, a \$200 million investment in early childhood education workforce development programs and increasing funding for teacher preparation programs.

The teacher workforce has grown year-over-year since the state's Evidence-Based Funding model was enacted in 2018. Since then, Illinois has added more than 5,000 teachers to the profession. Additionally, average teacher salaries have also grown year-over-year with the greatest increase in recent years occurring in 2021, when the first phase of the minimum teacher salary went into effect.

“All across the nation, school districts are fighting the impact of teacher shortages,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “That’s why I’ve worked with lawmakers and school districts across the state to find new ways to bring people into the profession and encourage them to stay there. In this fight for our children’s futures, school districts should know they’re far from alone.”

“Gov. Pritzker’s investments in strengthening our education system and increasing funding for schools have boosted teacher salaries, recruitment, retention, and diversity, even during the difficult years of the pandemic,” said State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala. “Today’s bill signing builds on those efforts to help schools meet the ongoing need for more substitute teachers and paraprofessionals. Continuing to make strategic, equity-driven improvements to our teacher pipelines will ensure that all students have the well-supported educators they need in every classroom, every day.”

House Bill 4246

State law currently requires educators to pay a \$500 penalty to immediately reinstate a lapsed license. Under House Bill 4246, fees for renewing lapsed educator license will be reduced to \$50.

“Retired teachers already have the skills and experience to create a dynamic learning environment and they are an incredible asset as we address the current teacher shortage,” said Rep. Sue Scherer (D-Decatur). “Waiving the registration fees for retired teachers to renew their licenses will help students across the state receive the high-quality education Illinois is known for.”

“Illinois, like everywhere else in the country, is facing challenges with recruiting and retaining teachers,” said Sen. Meg Loughran Cappel (D-Shorewood). “I am thrilled we are providing some relief to educators across our state and I will continue fighting for our teachers and students.”

The law is effective immediately.

House Bill 4798

Under current law, substitute teaching candidates must hold a bachelor's degree or higher. House Bill 4798 allows currently enrolled teaching students to obtain additional classroom training by giving them the option to obtain a substitute teaching license if they have completed 90 credit hours.

“I am pleased that Gov. Pritzker has signed HB 4798 into law,” said Rep. Anne Stava-Murray (D-Naperville). “This bill will streamline the process of qualified student-educators obtaining substitute teaching licenses, reducing bureaucratic red tape and will increase the availability of substitute teachers to better support our public schools at this critical time.”

The law is effective January 1, 2023.

Senate Bill 3988

Currently, the minimum age requirement is 19 for paraprofessional educators who work with students from pre-K to eighth grade. Senate Bill 3988 lowers this age requirement to 18, providing prospective educators with the chance to start a career earlier.

“Teachers and students alike benefit from the presence of a paraprofessional in the classroom. Finding a solution to address the more than 2,000 vacancies of this profession is vital,” said Sen. Cristina Pacione-Zayas (D-Chicago). “By lowering the age requirement by one year, we are opening the door to additional qualified applicants to get into classrooms and help students get the individualized support they may need.”

“I am proud of the work we've done in the legislature to address the teacher shortage,” said Rep. Dagmara Avelar (D-Bolingbrook). “SB3988 is a great way to do that, and I am looking forward to continuing to advocate for quality education.”

The law is effective January 1, 2023.

Senate Bill 3907

In the event of a disaster declaration, short term substitute teachers are only able to spend 5 consecutive days in the same classroom. Under Senate Bill 3907, this number is increased to 15.

“We are working to alleviate some of the stress our schools are facing when it comes to the ongoing teacher shortage,” said Sen. Doris Turner (D-Springfield). “I am proud to have supported this common-sense measure that keeps kids in the classroom and allows schools more flexibility during a time of adversity.”

“Expanding the number of consecutive days that educators may teach with a Short Term Substitute License from 5 days to 15 days will increase administrative efficiency and reduce clerical expenses while helping to address the current teacher shortage,” said Rep. Anne Stava-Murray (D-Naperville), who sponsored the bill in the House. “I am pleased that Gov. Pritzker has signed this important bill into law.”

The law is effective immediately.