

## RALLY REMARKS – ERIC ZARNIKOW, ISAC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

---

IT'S GREAT TO SEE SO MANY OF YOU HERE TODAY.

AS YOU HEARD, MY NAME IS ERIC ZARNIKOW, AND I'M THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION OR ISAC, THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR AWARDING MAP GRANTS.

ISAC WAS ESTABLISHED OVER 50 YEARS AGO, AND DURING THAT TIME, HAS AWARDED MORE THAN 4.8 MILLION GRANTS TOTALING MORE THAN \$9 BILLION IN FINANCIAL AID TO ASSIST ILLINOIS STUDENTS ATTAIN THEIR PERSONAL, ACADEMIC AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS.

THIS YEAR, NEARLY 158,000 MAP GRANTS WILL ULTIMATELY BE AWARDED. AND MANY OF YOU ARE RECIPIENTS. HOWEVER, FOR EVERY STUDENT RECEIVING ASSISTANCE, MANY OTHERS ARE BEING LEFT ON THE SIDELINES.

AS YOU WALK THROUGH THE CAPITOL TODAY IT'S LIKELY YOU'LL MEET SOME LEGISLATORS WHO WERE MAP RECIPIENTS; YOU MIGHT MEET LEGISLATIVE STAFF MEMBERS WHO WOULDN'T BE WORKING HERE TODAY IF NOT FOR A MAP GRANT; AND YOU ALREADY KNOW THE VALUE A MAP GRANT HAS IN YOUR LIFE.

YOU CAN FIND MAP RECIPIENTS IN ALL PARTS OF THE STATE AND IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE. WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON IS THE FACT THAT MAP ALLOWED THEM TO OPEN THE DOOR TO OPPORTUNITY – TO COMPLETE THEIR EDUCATION, TO FIND BETTER, HIGHER PAYING JOBS, AND MAKE GREATER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ECONOMIC WELLBEING OF THE STATE.

RECENTLY, ISAC CONDUCTED A STUDY OF MAP RECIPIENTS AND, AMONG OTHER THINGS, ASKED PARTICIPANTS TO SHARE WHAT MAP HAS MEANT TO THEM. I FOUND ONE RESPONSE REFLECTIVE OF MAP AT ITS BEST:

“MY MOM AND DAD DIDN'T GO TO COLLEGE, WHICH MY FATHER THINKS IS FINE FOR ME TOO. MY MOTHER CAN'T FIND A JOB. WITHOUT THE GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS I RECEIVED, COLLEGE WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME. I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL.”

MAP MATTERS EVERY DAY.

THESE WORDS RESONATE WITH ME. WHILE I WASN'T RAISED IN ILLINOIS, MY WIFE WAS. SHE CAME FROM A FAMILY THAT DID NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO SEND THEIR KIDS TO COLLEGE. AND NEITHER PARENT HAD A COLLEGE DEGREE.

BOTH SHE AND HER BROTHER WERE MAP GRANT RECIPIENTS. FORTUNATELY, IN ADDITION TO MAP, BOTH RECEIVED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT THROUGH WORK-STUDY AND SERVING AS RAS. WITHOUT THIS COMBINED ASSISTANCE, NEITHER OF THEM WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GO TO COLLEGE.

MAP MATTERS IN MY LIFE.

AND YOUR JOB WON'T BE DONE WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE TODAY, WHEN YOU RETURN TO YOUR CAMPUS, OR TO YOUR HOME OR APARTMENT OR, WHEREVER YOUR DESTINATION. KNOW THAT STARTING TODAY, AND EVERY DAY, MAP MATTERS AND YOU, THROUGH YOUR ACTIONS AND WORDS, CAN HELP PRESERVE AND EXPAND THE PROGRAM UNTIL THE NEEDS OF EVERY ELIGIBLE STUDENT ARE MET.

TODAY, EVERYONE YOU MEET WILL TELL YOU: MAP IS A GREAT PROGRAM, BUT TIMES IN ILLINOIS ARE ROUGH, AND TOUGH DECISIONS HAVE TO BE MADE. WHEN SOMEONE TELLS YOU THIS, LOOK THEM IN THE EYE AND SAY: YES, THE STATE HAS ITS CHALLENGES, BUT ONE OF THE KEY SOLUTION IS TO BUILD THE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE THAT CREATES THE HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE VITAL THE STATE'S ECONOMIC WELLBEING.

THERE'S A PLAN ON THE TABLE TO INCREASE MAP FUNDING BY \$50 MILLION. AND, TODAY, AND IN DAYS TO COME, YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

WHETHER YOU REALIZE IT OR NOT, STUDENTS ACROSS ILLINOIS APPRECIATE YOUR PRESENCE HERE TODAY. BY ADDING YOUR VOICE TO THE SCORES OF VOICES OF STUDENTS ACROSS THE STATE, TOGETHER WE CAN ENSURE THAT MAP CONTINUES TO MATTER.

YOUR ACTIONS, AND THOSE OF OTHERS, EXEMPLIFY THE BEST IN OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. YOU ARE EXERCISING YOUR RIGHT TO PETITION YOUR GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE ISSUES THAT MATTER MOST TO YOU,

THANK YOU.