



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 28, 2014

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MAP MATTERS: MAKING COLLEGE AFFORDABLE FOR ILLINOIS STUDENTS
Advocacy Campaign Supports Increased Funding for State's Monetary Award Program

DEERFIELD, IL— The Illinois Monetary Award Program (MAP) has made college possible for millions of low income students who otherwise might not have the resources to attend college. But as the state legislature negotiates the FY 2015 budget, crucial MAP dollars may be cut—putting at risk educational opportunities for thousands of Illinois residents. To get the word out about the importance of increasing funding to the state's largest need-based grant program, the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) has helped launch the [MAP Matters](#) campaign and website. The site is also promoting a [MAP Matters Day](#) rally, to be held in Springfield on April 30th.

“MAP matters to the 140,000 students who received MAP grants in the 2013-2014 school year, but it also matters to the 150,000 eligible students who were *not* offered MAP grants due to lack of funding,” said Eric Zarnikow, executive director of ISAC, the agency that administers the program. With the soaring costs of college, said Zarnikow, MAP now serves only about half the applicants who are eligible and covers less than half of the cost of tuition and fees at Illinois public universities and community colleges.

Elena Herrera knows first-hand the impact of MAP and how it can shape the future for Illinois students. Herrera grew up in Chicago's Brighton Park area, the youngest of 12 children whose parents didn't have the opportunity to complete elementary school. At age 38, Herrera became the first in her family to attend college with the help of MAP grants, getting an associate's degree from Moraine Valley Community College before graduating from the University of Illinois-Chicago with a degree in urban planning and public affairs. Since then she has paid it forward, serving as a student organizer and consultant for [Student Advocates for Success](#), counseling students at Moraine Valley (for which she received the college's 2014 Distinguished Alumnus Award), and guiding her nieces and nephews in getting to college. Most recently, Herrera launched two successful substance abuse recovery homes in Blue Island; Bridge House for men and a women's home called Advance Her Chance.

“Higher education changed everything for me,” said Herrera. “It gave me the skills and credentials to emerge from poverty and make a better life for myself, and empowered me to create positive change in my community. MAP helped make all of that possible.”

Governor Quinn's 2015 budget proposal includes a \$50 million increase in MAP funding, and a recommendation to double MAP over the next five years. An additional \$50 million would help at least 15-20,000 more students attend college, and doubling MAP could ultimately help 250,000 students

annually. However, unless and until the budget is finalized, it's possible that MAP funding could be cut by \$50 million in the 2014-2015 school year. If that happens, as many as 20,000 *fewer* students could receive MAP grants.

Tenisha Swift doesn't want to see that happen. A current MAP recipient, Swift will be graduating from Joliet Junior College with an associate's degree in criminal justice, and attending Governor's State University this fall to complete her bachelor's degree. Getting to college wasn't easy—Swift lost both of her parents by age 11 and lived with different family members throughout high school. But she knew that furthering her education is what her parents would have wanted for her, and she went after it with passion, keeping up her grades while serving as vice president of the Black Student Union and as secretary/treasurer of the Collegiate Club Council, among other activities. Her dream: to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Like many MAP recipients, Swift either would not have been able to attend college without MAP, or would have had to take fewer hours, find a full-time job, and extend her time to complete a degree. Or she would have been forced to take on more student loan debt—adding to the more than \$1 trillion of student loan debt nationally.

“MAP matters to me and thousands of other students who have the desire, dreams, and drive to go to college, but not the resources. For many of us, MAP is the ticket to our future.”

To find out more about why MAP Matters, about the MAP Matters Day rally, and to download easy-to-use tools for anyone to make their voice heard in support of MAP, visit www.isac.org/mapmatters.

About the Illinois Student Assistance Commission

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to help make college accessible and affordable for students throughout Illinois. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information on education and financial aid for students and their families—giving them access to the tools they need to make the educational choices that are right for them. Then, through the state's flagship Monetary Award Program and other scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers—totaling more than \$380 million in academic year 2013-14—ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. www.isac.org

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