



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Deerfield, Illinois

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HB 5020: Important Facts About the Priority Access MAP Bill

[HB 5020](#) as amended (see underlined text) is a bill aimed at providing students additional certainty in their financial aid packages. Because the bill is likely to become law and there appears to be some confusion about what it provides, the [Illinois Student Assistance Commission \(ISAC\)](#), the agency that administers the Monetary Award Program (MAP), is issuing this advisory to ensure that students and families are getting accurate information.

The following information may be helpful to you as you write about the bill.

- For 50 years, MAP has provided low-income students with funding that makes college possible for them. Since 2002, demand for MAP has consistently exceeded funding. MAP is awarded to eligible students on a first come, first served basis, based upon the date the student files their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®), the only application necessary to be considered for MAP.
- While MAP can help attract low income students to Illinois colleges and universities, its power to attract and retain students has been diminished because limited funding cannot serve all eligible students, reducing certainty that a student will have the funding available to them each year in order to complete their degree.
- **HB 5020 provides *priority access* to MAP for returning students.** HB 5020 aims to help attract and retain students by providing returning students with additional certainty about their financial aid packages. The bill requires ISAC to set a priority deadline each year and provides that a MAP-eligible returning student who completes the FAFSA by the priority deadline each year will receive a MAP grant so long as the state ultimately appropriates sufficient funds for MAP for that fiscal/academic year. ISAC will provide this priority access deadline well in advance to help ensure that returning students have time to file their FAFSAs to meet the priority deadline.

- **Neither the FY19 budget bills nor HB 5020 provide a four-year MAP guarantee.** We understand that many legislators' ultimate goal was to provide a four-year guarantee for MAP recipients, but *neither the budget bills nor the MAP bill actually funds MAP for four years or guarantees it.* We are pleased to see FY19 MAP funding held level with FY 18 (which saw a 10% increase in MAP), but MAP, like most state programs, is still subject to the annual appropriation of funds by the General Assembly and Governor. That said, the program *has* been funded each year for 50 years (although, like many other programs, it was funded very late during the recent two-year budget delay). HB 5020 would provide returning students with priority access to MAP funding.
- **Returning students must still file a FAFSA every year.** The priority access bill does not change the requirement for students to file a FAFSA each year. Every student who would like to be considered for a MAP grant must file a FAFSA annually; **in order to have priority access to funding, MAP-eligible returning students must file their FAFSA by the priority access deadline** which will be provided by ISAC. It's important to note that the FAFSA is not only the application for MAP, but it is also the application for federal Pell grants and other financial aid that must be reapplied for each year, so it is important that students complete a FAFSA each year.
- **The bill provides that the priority access program will begin with the 2020-21 school year.** Students who will be returning students in the 2020-21 school year can expect to be notified of a priority access filing deadline well before the 2020-21 FAFSA becomes available on October 1, 2019.

For additional information, please see the [FAQ](#) on ISAC's website at isac.org/home/priority-access-map-bill.

About ISAC

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 scholarship and grant programs ISAC administers, ISAC can help students make those choices a reality. www.isac.org

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