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Stand for Children Announces Legislation Aimed at Reversing Illinois Brain Drain

Springfield – Stand for Children Illinois, a non-partisan, equity-focused education advocacy non-profit, announced the filing of legislation with the intent of reversing Illinois’ brain drain and boosting opportunities for high school students. The legislation is the outgrowth of recommendations from the organization’s recent report, “STOP ILLINOIS BRAIN DRAIN: Building Pathways to Prosperity for High School Students.” Together, the bills aim to improve opportunities in the areas of course equity, career and technical education, freshman-on-track early warning systems, and other high school success budget priorities.

“Strengthening Illinois high schools and offering more avenues to college and career have been guiding principles for our work, especially in the wake of our Stop Illinois Brain Drain report. The bills we announced today go a long way to improving the opportunities available to high school students and stopping Illinois’ terrible brain drain problem,” said Mimi Rodman, Executive Director of Stand for Children Illinois. “Our state faces two kinds of brain drain: one, with our high school graduates leaving for out-of-state colleges, and the other by how our state badly under-taps the potential of the graduates who remain in Illinois.”

The bills announced today include:

- **The Course Equity Act of 2019, SB 1212 (Lightford)**, would improve access to advanced coursework by making courses more affordable for low-income schools and students, allowing students to opt-in to courses that are recommended for college admission but not offered in their home district, and opening doors to dual credit and transitional math opportunities.
- **HB 2093 (Crespo/Bertino-Tarrant) would align CTE courses with job trends.** The bill requires the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to rework its process for funding CTE courses to provide higher reimbursement rates for completion of high-demand, high-wage career area courses. It would also differentiate reimbursement rates by course sequence.

Finally, the bill would establish a grants program to support local partnerships that can facilitate the creation of locally relevant pathway endorsements and programs of study.

- **Freshman-on-Track Early Warning System Grants, SB 1303 (Manar).** Students who are “on-track” to graduate after freshman year are three times more likely to graduate high school. Dedicated freshman-on-track grants will jumpstart systems in high schools with low rates to focus on intervention before freshmen fall behind. Grant funding could be used to hire dedicated staff to support freshman year students, provide professional development to current staff to integrate practices that boost freshman attendance, increase tutoring and other supports for ninth graders who are failing core courses, providing in-school mentoring opportunities to freshmen, and other practices likely to lead to improved success.
- Stand budget priorities include **\$450 million in new Evidence-Based Formula funding**; a **\$100 million increase for Monetary Award Program (MAP) grants**; **\$12.6 million increase for career and technical education**, an allocation that has largely been flat since 2004; a new **\$5 million appropriation for freshman success grants**; and, a new **\$1.2 million appropriation for CTE infrastructure** that can go a long way to ensuring all regions have the support they need to create and maintain critical regional partnerships.

“Illinois high school students cannot wait any longer for more equitable access to opportunities for prosperity,” said Rodman. “We are proud to partner with Reps. Crespo and Batinick and Sens. Lightford, Bertino-Tarrant, and Weaver, and we urge all legislators to support these bills. Illinois students should be immersed in career possibilities and supported to understand how to achieve their career goals, and these bills help them do just that,” said Rodman.

Learn more about the bills and Stop Illinois Brain Drain report that inspired these policy solutions, online at stand.org/stopilbraindrain.

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Stand for Children Illinois is a non-partisan education advocacy organization focused on ensuring all students receive a high quality, relevant education, especially children whose boundless potential is overlooked and under-tapped because of their skin color, zip code, first language, or disability.