



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 09, 2026

Contact: ISAC: Vera Mandilovitch

847.831.8620

vera.mandilovitch@illinois.gov

Kaplan: Russell Schaffer

Russell.Schaffer@Kaplan.com

Illinois Continues First-In-The-Nation Free Test Prep Program

Building on Governor Pritzker's Affordability Agenda, the FY27 Proposed Budget will fund free test preparation courses through June 2027

CHICAGO – The [Illinois Student Assistance Commission](#) (ISAC) and global education company [Kaplan](#) today announced that Illinois' first-in-the-nation free test preparation program – the Prepare for Illinois' Future Program – will continue through the end of the academic school year. Additionally, Governor JB Pritzker has proposed to fund the program through the FY27 budget for another year as part of his Affordability Agenda and commitment to strengthening access to postsecondary opportunities.

Thirteen months after the launch of this program, in which the State has so far [invested \\$9.9 million](#), more than 12,000 students registered for Kaplan's free test prep courses, collectively saving students over \$30 million. The Governor is recommending a \$7 million appropriation for the program in FY27.

"As Governor, I am committed to making Illinois the best state in the nation to obtain an affordable education and pursue postsecondary opportunities," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "Thanks to our continued investments in career advancement tools like our first-in-the-nation free test prep program, we are making life more affordable for thousands of students by helping them prepare for their careers now and earn more in the future."

The program has demonstrated strong outcomes for equity and workforce needs across the state:

- Accelerating graduates' transition into high-demand professions such as Engineering, Project Management, IT, and helping ensure a highly credentialed and licensed Illinois workforce.
- More than 60% of participants identify as students of color, and low-income students are accessing preparation courses at five times their pre-program rate.
- Nursing students who completed Kaplan NCLEX-RN preparation achieved a 97% predicted pass rate, far exceeding both Illinois and national averages, helping address the state's critical nursing shortage.
- Students completing MCAT preparation courses are on track to significantly increase medical school admissions rates for Black and Hispanic students, addressing long-standing gaps in Illinois' physician pipeline.

The program offers Kaplan's test and license preparation and workforce credentialing courses to all students enrolled in Illinois' 12 public universities, and the program has been piloted at five community colleges chosen to

--more--

reflect the geographic and demographic diversity of the state. Students at these institutions have received free access to Kaplan’s best-in-class preparation for professional licensing exams, graduate-level admissions exams, and credential exams, including comprehensive prep for the GRE®, GMAT®, LSAT®, MCAT®, NCLEX-RN®, USMLE®, Illinois State bar exam, real estate and securities exams, and more. The program is designed to increase earnings potential, expand the state’s tax base, and help employers fill critical workforce shortages.

“Even during a challenging budget year, Governor Pritzker’s recommendation to fund this program for FY27 reflects his ongoing commitment to improving educational access for Illinois students,” said **ISAC Executive Director Eric Zarnikow**. “Prepare for Illinois’ Future has not only offered a tremendous opportunity for our school partners and their students but has also proved to be a good investment for the state. The value of the courses offered thus far is about three times the initial appropriation, and the long-term benefit of investing in our students’ futures, improving access, and breaking down financial barriers, is incalculable.”

“The Prepare for Illinois’ Future program is a game-changing workforce development solution, unlocking opportunity and making higher education more affordable and accessible for hundreds of thousands of Illinois students. It’s already reshaping the landscape by opening new career pathways, ensuring that Illinois students aren’t just graduating, but are immediately qualified to enter high-demand careers and secure their futures,” said **Gregory Marino, CEO, Kaplan North America**. “The enthusiasm from students and communities all across the state we’ve seen over the past year since the program launched has been inspiring, and we look forward to continuing our work with the state’s colleges and universities and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission to help even more aspiring doctors, nurses, teachers, cyber security experts, engineers, and other essential professionals realize their full potential.”

Students enrolled in all Illinois public universities and at Joliet Junior College, Carl Sandburg College, Southwestern Illinois College, Malcolm X College, and Morton College can register for the Prepare for Illinois’ Future program to take advantage of free test preparation by visiting Go.Kaplan.com/Illinois.

Test names and other trademarks are the property of the respective trademark holders.

###

About ISAC

The mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to provide Illinois students with information and assistance to help make education beyond high school accessible and affordable. ISAC provides comprehensive, objective, and timely information about higher 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. Find us at isac.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), and on [YouTube](#).

About Kaplan

Kaplan, Inc. is a global education company that helps individuals and institutions advance their goals in an ever-changing world. Our broad portfolio of solutions helps students and professionals further their education and careers, universities and educational institutions attract and support students, and businesses maximize employee recruitment, retention, and development. Stanley Kaplan founded our company in 1938 with a mission to expand educational opportunities for students of all backgrounds. Today, our thousands of employees working in 27 countries/regions continue Stanley’s mission as they serve about 1.2 million students and professionals, 15,000 corporate clients, and 3,300 schools, school districts, colleges, and universities worldwide. Kaplan is a subsidiary of the Graham Holdings Company (NYSE: GHC). Learn more at Kaplan.com.