



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION**

April 21, 2026

Whitney Thompson  
Deputy Director for Workforce Education  
Illinois Community College Board  
401 East Capitol Avenue  
Springfield, IL 62701

VIA EMAIL TO: [whitney.thompson@illinois.gov](mailto:whitney.thompson@illinois.gov)

Dear Deputy Director Thompson:

Thank you for your application to the U.S. Department of Education (Department) regarding the Illinois Community College Board's request for approval of an ability-to-benefit (ATB) State process. This process allows students without high school diplomas to receive Federal student financial aid while enrolled in an eligible career pathway program.

I am pleased to inform you that the Department has approved your application. Your initial State process was set to expire on May 15, 2026. As a result of this reapproval, your state process is approved until May 15, 2031.

Please note that participating institutions must indicate in the Department's Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) system that a student has qualified for ATB under the "State Process" by submitting a Student Eligibility Code (SEC) value of "03-State Process" and then entering the required approved state in the Ability to Benefit State Code field.

If you have questions regarding COD System processing of ATB students, please contact Megan Giedraitis at [megan.giedraitis@ed.gov](mailto:megan.giedraitis@ed.gov) or (312) 730-1691.

For all other questions, please contact Aaron Washington at [aaron.washington@ed.gov](mailto:aaron.washington@ed.gov) or (202) 987-0911.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey R. Andrade", with a small checkmark to the right.

Jeffrey R. Andrade  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Policy, Planning, and Innovation