

2021 IMPACT REPORT | YEAR 4



Dear Friends,

Throughout the year we hear from families in every corner of the state: big families, single parent families, families facing personal struggles, families with kids managing unique learning needs, families looking for a best-fit school. Every family has a special story, but a common thread unites them all—hope.

It is hope for a better, brighter future for their children that buoys these families. **Regardless of neighborhood or income, all families want and deserve for their children to succeed.** Hope guides us, too; hope that we will help more families, students, and schools; hope that the Tax Credit Scholarship Program will continue to improve; and hope that we can help provide that brighter future families seek. We are honored to work every day with and for these families and their students to open doors to opportunity through the Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

OVER
\$250,000,000
RAISED STATEWIDE
(2018-2021)

OVER
\$176,000,000
RAISED BY EMPOWER ILLINOIS
(2018-2021)

And, of course, it is thanks to you, your generous support and partnership, and your willingness to do even more in the face of these challenges that we can advance our mission to expand education opportunities for children from low-income and working-class communities throughout Illinois. I am happy to share that we have raised more dollars and awarded more tax credit scholarships than ever before across the entire state and all scholarship granting organizations. The Empower Illinois community raised **over \$48 million in tax credit scholarship donations and awarded over 6,000 scholarships**—record totals that are now the new baseline for greater impact.

These record scholarship and fundraising totals were bolstered by strong partnerships, a statewide tax credit scholarship coalition, and comprehensive grassroots advocacy efforts that helped secure important improvements to

the Invest in Kids Act Tax Credit Scholarship Program. **Most importantly, lawmakers passed a one-year extension of the program through the end of 2023.** This extra year gives families and schools greater stability in their educational choices and gives us more time to demonstrate the full impact of these scholarships for thousands of students and their families who have found a best-fit school. These families have been served by the many hundreds of private school communities that have worked tirelessly and heroically this past year to provide an excellent and truly life-changing education.

As we set our sights on even more ambitious goals, we are resolved to award significantly more scholarships, so more deserving children and their families can attend their best-fit school, and provide even more stability through incremental legislative enhancements that make the vital Tax Credit Scholarship Program more efficient, effective, and long lasting.

I hope you enjoy reading the following pages highlighting inspiring successes from this past year, and that you celebrate how your support, your partnership, and your advocacy made all these achievements possible. We are building a brighter future for kids across Illinois, together. Let us not rest on these past successes, but instead build on this momentum with hope and in partnership until this movement is an overwhelming force for good, for kids, and for their future.

Sincerely,

Anthony Holter
President

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EMPOWER MISSION

The Empower Illinois mission is to expand quality education options for low-income and working-class families of Illinois.

EMPOWER HISTORY

EMPOWER ILLINOIS HAS A **BIG, BOLD MISSION** ROOTED IN THE SIMPLE BELIEF THAT EVERY CHILD SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION OPTIONS.

Over the years, our team members have devoted themselves to this mission through classroom work, policy research, and scholarship granting. Each of these efforts, over many years and under numerous iterations, has become the core of Empower Illinois.

Knowing Illinois and its students are capable of incredible things, Empower Illinois has looked for ways to support students further. We succeeded in this policy work through strong partnerships. In 2016, working with the Illinois Association for Gifted Children, we advocated for and passed the Untapped Potential Act, and in 2017, working again with the same organization, we advocated for and passed the Accelerated Placement Act. These accomplishments were hard-fought and won with the nascent organization's small team.

Our largest accomplishment once again came through cooperation, as education leaders across the state united to improve the public school funding formula and expand options for all Illinoisans. Through the bipartisan passage of Illinois' Invest in Kids Act in 2017, Illinois' Tax Credit Scholarship Program uses private dollars to fund K-12 scholarships for low-income and working-class students, whose education options were previously limited by household income.

With the successful passing of the Invest in Kids Act, Empower Illinois quickly established itself as a statewide Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) to serve Illinois' children. As the leading SGO in our state, Empower Illinois supports schools in their tax credit fundraising efforts,

while assisting students and their families through the scholarship process that can help make their dreams a reality. In under a year, Empower Illinois went from a three-person policy shop to Illinois' largest SGO with a full-time staff helping thousands of children reach their full potential.

When the Tax Credit Scholarship Program launched, there was no platform designed to accept donations, issue scholarship awards, and remain in compliance with the Invest in Kids Act regulations. As early demand for the program skyrocketed, our team recognized the need to build a custom, transparent, and user-friendly solution: EmpowerXChange®. In August 2021, the EmpowerXChange's revolutionary and novel capabilities secured a technology United States Patent.

In 2019 and 2021, Empower Illinois led the fight to protect education opportunities for Illinois' kids. When opponents sought to cut and cap the Tax Credit Scholarship Program, Empower Illinois supported its broad coalition in daily advocacy trips to Springfield. Thanks to their efforts, the Invest in Kids Act remains intact and scholarship opportunities have continued to empower Illinois' kids. Most importantly in 2021, the Tax Credit Scholarship Community secured a one-year extension to the program's sunset, giving families additional certainty for their kids' education.

Today, Empower Illinois is poised to broaden our focus on education opportunity and ingenuity, always in the service of Illinois' children and their families.

EMPOWER IMPACT

3 LAWS
PASSED
SINCE 2017

22,000+
SCHOLARSHIPS
AWARDED

\$176M+
RAISED FOR
SCHOLARSHIPS



EMPOWER LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sara Albrecht
Jack Buck
Daniel P. Daly †
Ward Hamm
Daniel Lipinski
Karin Norington Reaves
Jim Perry, *Chairperson*
John Schoenig
Chris Wallace
Avrum Weinfeld

EMERITUS BOARD MEMBERS

John Buck
John Schreiber

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Sara Albrecht, *Chairperson*
Jeff Aeder
Doug Gourley
Mary Clare Gourley
Tom Hulsebosch
Nancy Hulsebosch
John Kirtley
Andy McKenna
Levoyd Robinson
John Schreiber
Scott Schuster
Joe Scoby
Peter Thompson
Peter Vilim
Ed Wehmer
Mark Wight

† With great sadness, we share the passing of Empower Illinois Director, Daniel P. Daly. Dan was a passionate, warm, and vocal champion of quality education options to kids across Illinois. We are eternally grateful for his leadership, guidance, and support that helped thousands of kids find a best fit school and a brighter future. On behalf of the Empower Illinois Board of Directors and Team, we extend our deepest sympathies to Dan's family.

STAFF

Clarissa Acosta, *Customer Success Agent*
Brandan Allen, *Director of Finance and Compliance*
Carolyn Broughton, *Senior Development Manager*
Emma Ciavarella, *Communications Director*
Kimberly Cummins, *Administrative Assistant*
Chris Davis, *Customer Success Manager*
Alyssa Donato, *Customer Success Agent*
Justine Gagne Weidel, *Office Manager*
Anthony Holter, *President*
Niko Kourtis, *Customer Success Agent*
Araceli Mendoza, *Customer Success Agent*
Emma Nelson, *Major Gift Officer*
Christian Padilla, *Finance Associate*
Karla Pineda, *Regional Manager*
Juan Rangel, *Strategy Director*
Julia Sullivan, *Communications Manager*
Bobby Sylvester, *Regional Manager*
Katie Taylor, *Development Associate*
Fjolla Vitia, *Customer Success Agent*
Susan Walker, *Finance Consultant*
Ethan Weisbaum, *Customer Success Agent*
Mauricio Zhagui, *Customer Success Agent*



EMPOWER BY THE NUMBERS

In 2021, Empower Illinois awarded **6,197** scholarships at an average amount of **\$6,600** per award.

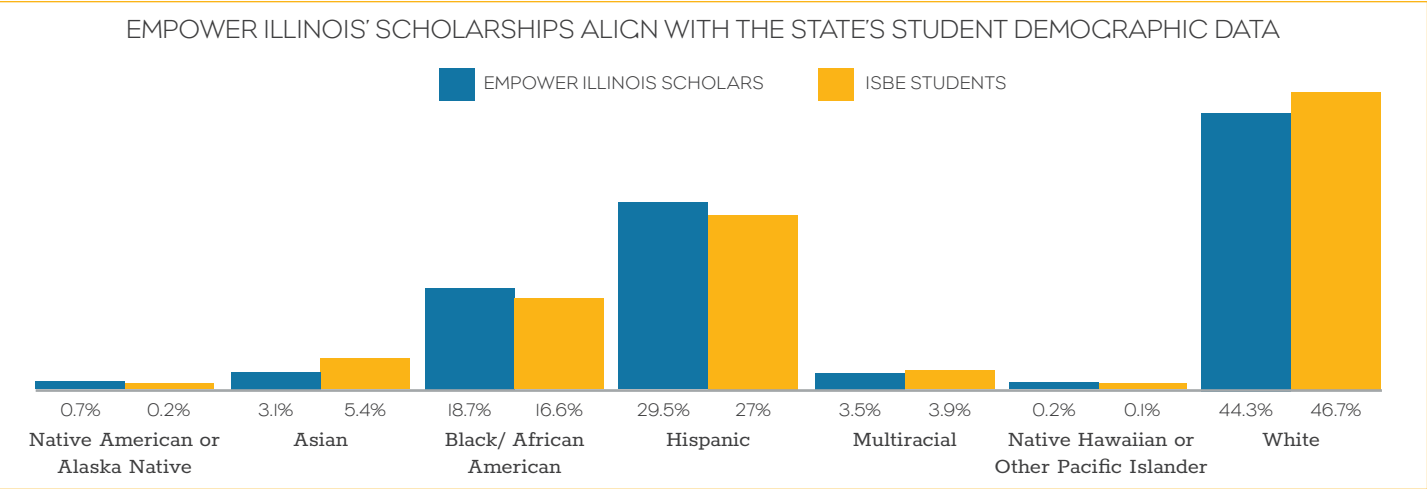
20,257
APPLICANTS

—

1 IN 9
STUDENTS HAVE
UNIQUE NEEDS

—

100%
QUALIFY BASED
ON NEED



Empower Illinois raised **\$48,327,837** with the support of **2,994** generous donors.

\$3,000
MEDIAN DONATION

—

\$1,000
MOST COMMON DONATION

—

95%
DIRECTLY FUNDS
SCHOLARSHIPS

Empower Illinois awarded scholarships at **430** schools in **5** regions.

Over **92%** of eligible schools partner with Empower Illinois.

\$8,554
AVERAGE COST
OF TUITION

—

14
AVERAGE NUMBER OF
SCHOLARSHIPS PER SCHOOL

\$43,357 OR 165%

of the poverty level, average family household income of scholarship recipients

67%
of scholarships go to
families who make
less than 185% of
the poverty level

20%
of scholarships go to
families who make
between 185%-250%
of the poverty level

13%
of scholarships go to
families who make
between 250%-400%
of the poverty level



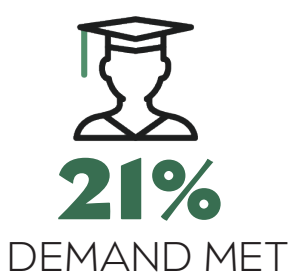


EMPOWER STUDENTS

DEMAND FOR TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIPS IN ILLINOIS IS OVERWHELMING, TOPPING OVER **\$196 MILLION**. CURRENT FUNDING ALLOWED ONLY **21%** OF APPLICANTS TO RECEIVE A SCHOLARSHIP IN THE FALL 2021-SPRING 2022 SCHOOL YEAR.

These numbers underscore the demand for the Tax Credit Scholarship Program and speak to the power of quality education options. Empower Illinois will continue to

protect and hopefully expand the Tax Credit Scholarship Program so each of the 29,821 kids in line for a scholarship can receive an education that best fits their needs.



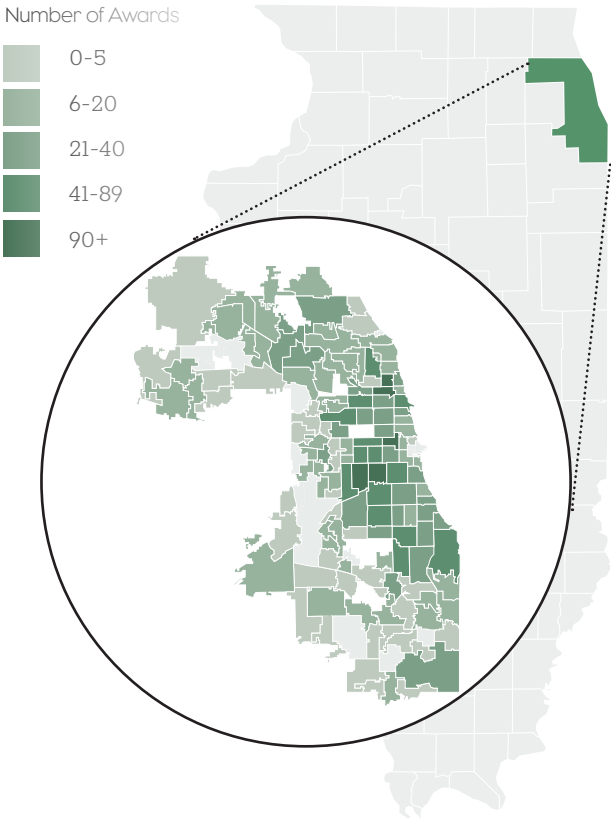
\$196,634,008
REQUIRED TO FUND ALL KIDS
WHO WANT A SCHOLARSHIP

WHEN ASKED TO RANK WHICH REASONS FAMILIES OPTED TO APPLY FOR A TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP TO ATTEND A PRIVATE SCHOOL, FAMILIES PLACED THESE AMONG THEIR TOP 5:

- 1** Wanted a school with religious/ faith-based instruction
- 2** Wanted a school with higher academic quality
- 3** Wanted a school with character/values instruction
- 4** Wanted a safer school
- 5** Wanted a school with smaller class sizes

REGION 1

CHICAGO | CICERO | SKOKIE | BERWYN | EVANSTON
NORTHBROOK | PALATINE | MAYWOOD | WHEELING
DES PLAINES | MOUNT PROSPECT | GLENVIEW



12,197
TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS

3,276
TOTAL NUMBER OF AWARDEES

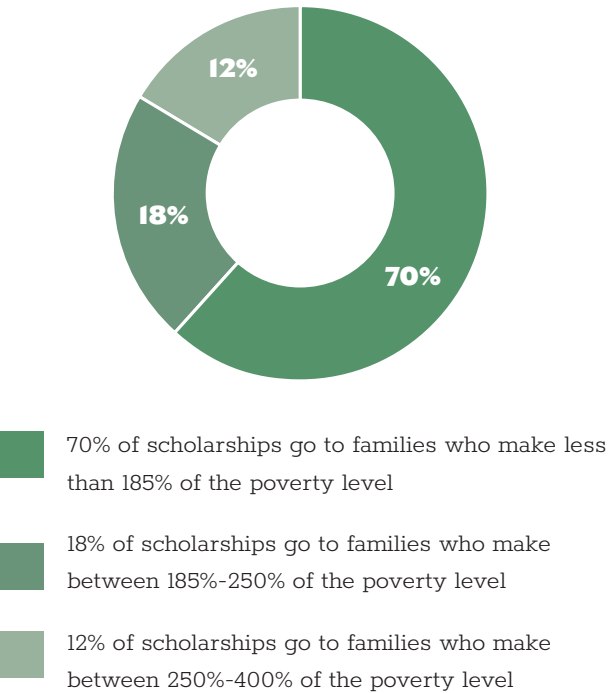
\$32,166,904
DONATED

201
SCHOOLS

ETHNIC/RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

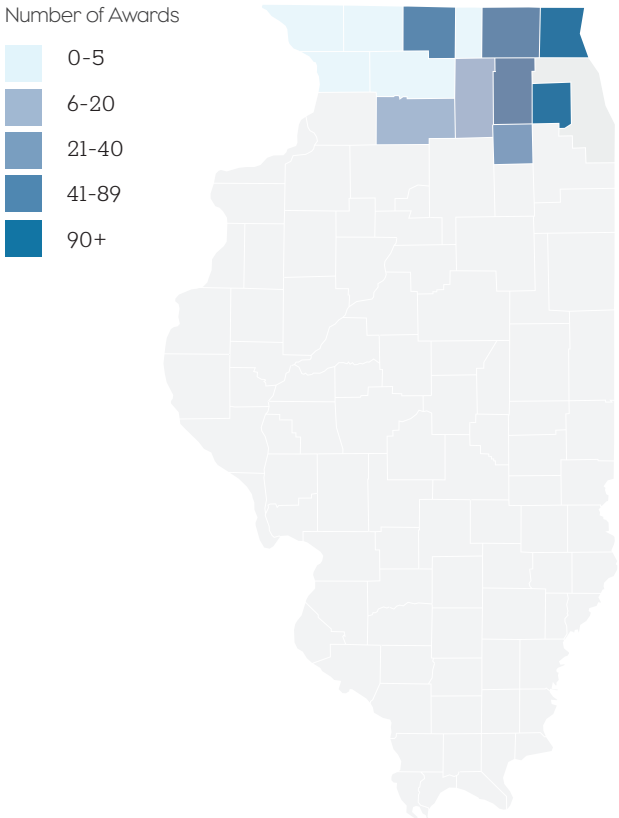
RACE/ETHNICITY	PERCENT OF STUDENTS
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.7%
Asian	2.8%
Black/African American	25%
Hispanic	32.7%
Multiracial	3.7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
White	35%
GRAND TOTAL	100%

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



REGION 2

DUPAGE | LAKE | WINNEBAGO | MCHENRY | KANE
KENDALL | LEE | DEKALB | STEPHENSON | BOONE



3,849
TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS

1,207
TOTAL NUMBER OF AWARDEES

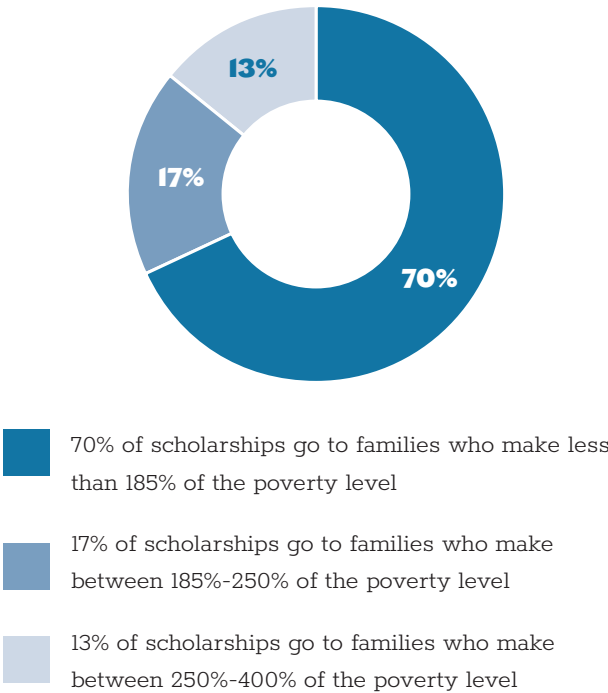
\$8,271,952
DONATED

97
SCHOOLS

ETHNIC/RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

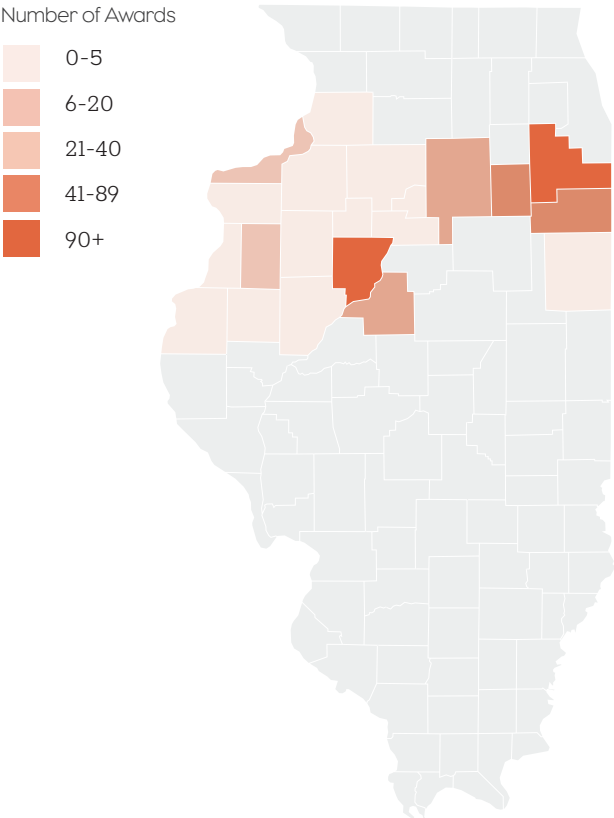
RACE/ETHNICITY	PERCENT OF STUDENTS
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.7%
Asian	6.5%
Black/African American	9%
Hispanic	35.1%
Multiracial	3.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.3%
White	45.1%
GRAND TOTAL	100%

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



REGION 3

PEORIA | WILL | KANKAKEE | CRUNDY | TAZEWELL
LASALLE | WARREN | ROCK ISLAND | KNOX
MCDONOUGH | HENRY



1,966
TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS

726
TOTAL NUMBER OF AWARDEES

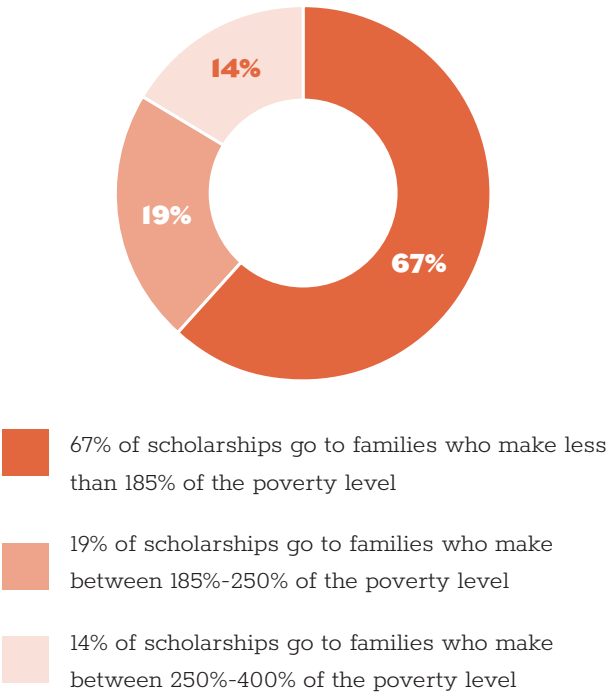
\$3,872,264
DONATED

53
SCHOOLS

ETHNIC/RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

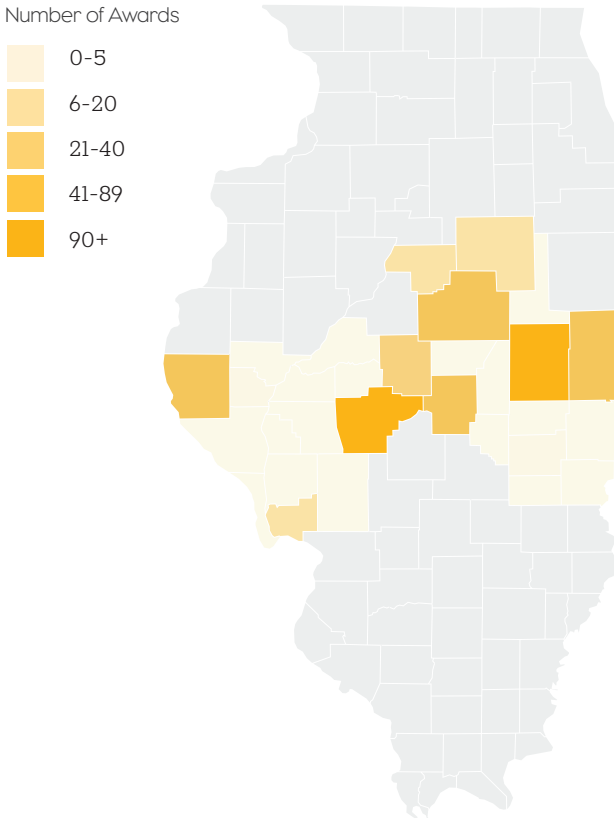
RACE/ ETHNICITY	PERCENT OF STUDENTS
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%
Asian	1.8%
Black/African American	9.5%
Hispanic	32.8%
Multiracial	3.8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
White	52.1%
GRAND TOTAL	100%

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



REGION 4

SANGAMON | CHAMPAIGN | MACON | VERMILION
MCLEAN | ADAMS | LOGAN | JERSEY | LIVINGSTON
WOODFORD | BROWN | COLES



1,403
TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS

572
TOTAL NUMBER OF AWARDEES

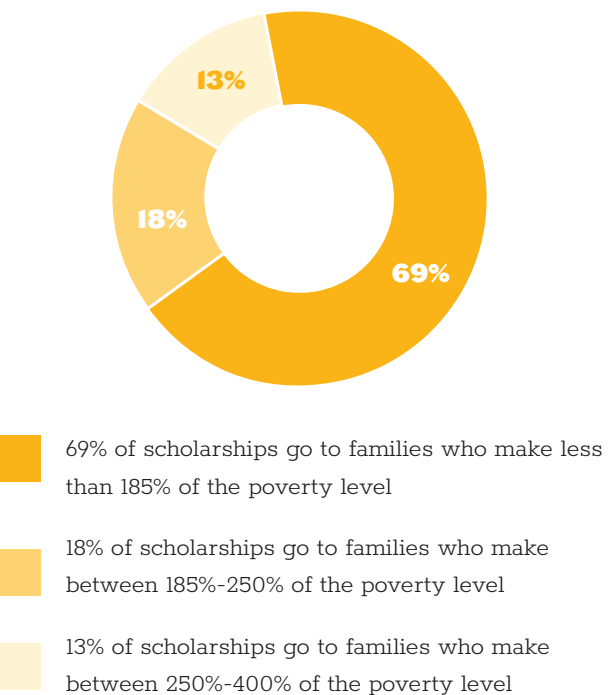
\$2,462,240
DONATED

44
SCHOOLS

ETHNIC/RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

RACE/ ETHNICITY	PERCENT OF STUDENTS
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.3%
Asian	1.7%
Black/African American	20.5%
Hispanic	10%
Multiracial	4.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.2%
White	62.9%
GRAND TOTAL	100%

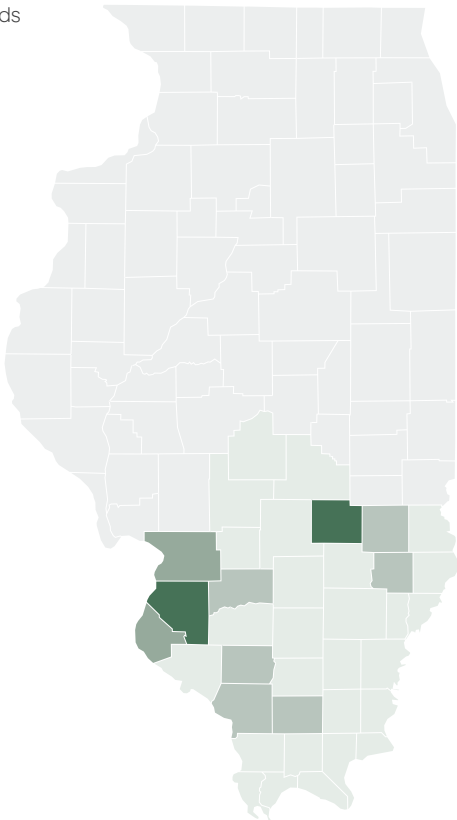
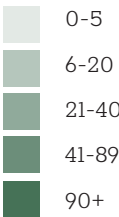
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



REGION 5

EFFINGHAM | ST. CLAIR | MADISON | MONROE | JASPER
JACKSON | RICHLAND | PERRY | WILLIAMSON | CLINTON
CHRISTIAN | MONTGOMERY | SHELBY | RANDOLPH

Number of Awards



842
TOTAL NUMBER OF APPLICANTS

416
TOTAL NUMBER OF AWARDEES

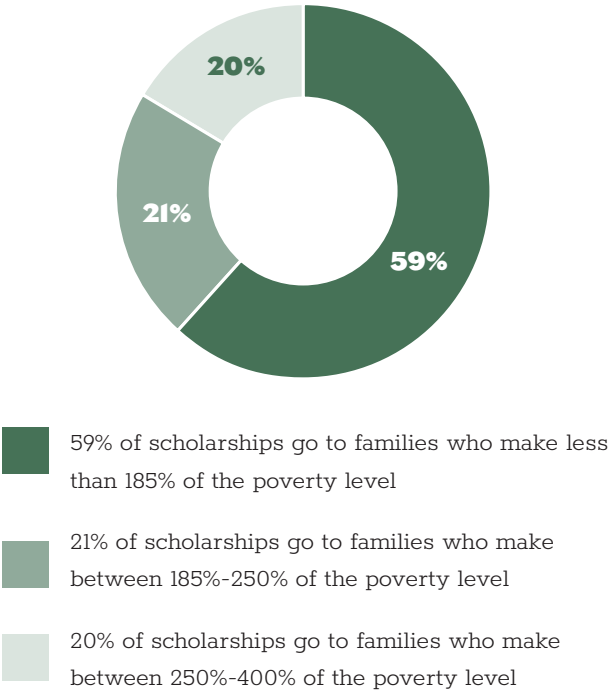
\$1,560,477
DONATED

29
SCHOOLS

ETHNIC/RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

RACE/ ETHNICITY	PERCENT OF STUDENTS
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.4%
Asian	0.5%
Black/African American	11.5%
Hispanic	8.9%
Multiracial	1.7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
White	76%
GRAND TOTAL	100%

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS





DONOR ADVISED SCHOLARSHIPS

EMPOWER ILLINOIS IS THANKFUL TO DONORS WHO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIP ASSISTANCE TO ILLINOIS FAMILIES

RISE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

For low-income and working-class families without a connection to private schools, learning about private school options and securing funds to pay tuition is not easy. The RISE Scholarship Program supports these families by offering scholarships to students who previously attended public schools and want to switch to their best-fit private school. The RISE Scholarship Program provides students with financial assistance up to \$5,000 per school year, if they qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Participating schools work to promote the RISE

Scholarship opportunity and select qualifying students. Scholarship funding is generously provided and designated by anonymous donors who believe in expanding private school options to new students. Critical to expanding education opportunities, the RISE Scholarship program also cultivates school-based advocacy. This scholarship and advocacy-integrated model connects students and schools with the community and governmental leaders who can learn from the students' experience to advance and scale policy innovation kids need and deserve.



342

SCHOLARSHIPS
78% RENEWING STUDENTS
22% NEW STUDENTS



49

SCHOOLS



\$2,053

AVERAGE
SCHOLARSHIP



\$26,983

AVERAGE FAMILY INCOME,
FAMILY OF FOUR

UNITED IN LOVE (UIL)

Designed to support students in emergency situations, the United in Love Scholarship provides students with a scholarship equal to their qualifying tax credit scholarship. Schools identify students who may be in need of

emergency funds, facing severe financial hardship, or did not have their tax credit scholarship renewed. Scholarship funding is provided and designated by donors who seek to provide students with educational stability.



246

SCHOLARSHIPS



10

SCHOOLS



\$2,612

AVERAGE
SCHOLARSHIP



\$29,079

AVERAGE FAMILY INCOME,
FAMILY OF FOUR



97%

OF FAMILIES WERE 'EXTREMELY SATISFIED' OR 'VERY SATISFIED' ABOUT THEIR DECISION TO PURSUE A TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP AT THEIR BEST-FIT SCHOOL.

EMPOWER FAMILIES



Toni S., Mother

I'm a single mom with one daughter. I worked a full-time job and a second part-time job just so that I could send her to a Catholic grammar school starting in kindergarten. I knew early on that public schools wouldn't meet my daughter's needs and potential; I just wanted better for her. I worked two jobs to put her in a Catholic school. It wasn't until around eighth grade that Empower Illinois came onto the scene. That was probably the first time I could actually breathe a

little and not work as much — actually get to spend a little more time with my daughter. In sixth grade, they started talking to the kids about high school. I really didn't want to tell her, but there was no way we could afford private high school...even with the financial aid package, we would come up short. But when Empower Illinois came along, that was our first bit of hope. She is really into music and has been since a young age. Now she's part of four different bands and is also part of stage crew, theater, and the art program. Music is definitely something she wants to pursue in college and possibly beyond. The resources and opportunities have made it possible for her talents to grow- it's been incredible to watch. Without scholarships, none of this would have ever been a possibility. Kids with bright futures ahead of them would get lost in the mix, in the midst of overcrowded schools when they deserve a better education. They deserve smaller classrooms and good schools. These scholarships make that possible for families like ours. They make a huge difference.

Crystal H. Mother

I'm a single parent with one daughter. She attended public school for elementary and middle school, and we felt her academic needs weren't being met. She was acing all her classes, participating in extracurriculars, and still found that she wasn't being challenged. I began to look into private school options as she got ready to go to high school but I knew I couldn't financially support that. As a single parent, I wasn't able to support the rest of her needs either. I found out about the Tax Credit Scholarships through the school and applied. It was a little overwhelming, to be honest, to know that her future really relied on the chance of her getting these scholarships. I remember, honestly, just crying out of happiness. I knew that this is the right path for her. She was overwhelmed with joy, too — knowing that she'd be going somewhere that would support her and challenge her. I know of other children in the community that need this support and can do amazing things with their lives, but they need the financial support to get them there. I really hope everyone in an underserved community like ours gets the support that they need to attend the schools that are going to foster their academic needs.



Stacy H., Mother

Before my divorce, all three of my sons were attending private Jewish Day Schools, and afterward I became solely financially responsible for their education. The divorce was already a huge upset in my children's lives, and I wanted to keep things as normal as possible. Pulling them out of school where they had friends and a community they had grown to know, and love would have been another huge disruption and derailed my efforts to raise them as Orthodox Jewish young men. Thankfully, we received scholarships all four years of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program, which allowed me to keep my kids at their best-fit schools. I felt sending them to a school where they could receive a Jewish-based education was incredibly



Sharyl R., Mother

My husband and I have three kids. I am in nursing school, so we have basically been on one income the last few years. We are a Christian family and wanted to send our kids to private school, but it is expensive, and we could not afford it. When the COVID-19 pandemic happened, things started getting worse at our public school. Obviously remote learning is not as effective as being in the classroom, and I realized that it was not working for my kids. I pulled my boys out of the public

school and started homeschooling them. There are a lot of resources, but it was a lot to juggle, especially with my own schoolwork. After a few months of homeschooling, I was having a really hard time. My husband and I discussed if we should try living on a tighter budget or taking money out of our retirement fund to afford private school for the kids. I remember that was a Tuesday night, and then Wednesday morning we received a call that they had a 75% scholarship for my son for the 2020-2021 school year. If that is not an answer to a prayer, I do not know what is! The Tax Credit Scholarship Program is so important because it allows families to choose their best-fit school. For example, having smaller class sizes and a faith-based education was important for us. Not every environment or every classroom setting works for every kid. You should not only be able to attend private school if you are wealthy, and this program has made it possible for so many families like mine.

Elizabeth F., Mother

I am a mother of soon to be five children. I would dedicate and sacrifice myself to work to earn enough money for them to attend a Catholic school. When I got married, we moved out to a new home and I became a stay at home mom. That's when things became very difficult for us because we were unable to afford the tuition on a single income. Sadly, for the first year my children attended a local public school for the first time in their lives and that had a major impact on them. My children were noticeably unhappy and it felt like everything I sacrificed to educate them and give them a good formation in their upbringing went to waste right before my eyes. Just when I felt like all hope was gone is when I heard about Empower Illinois from my sister. I immediately took action, and with much hope and prayer both my children were blessed with receiving this scholarship. I have seen the extreme difference to see how important a good education is for our children. Today, my son is an 8th grader, and my daughter is in 3rd grade. Never have I witnessed such happiness in their lives along with the motivation to improve academically and spiritually. I want to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart all the support from Empower Illinois for granting them this opportunity and the school staff for the wonderful job they have done educating all their students!



important towards maintaining their Jewish identity. Their Jewish education has made all the difference in helping them become successful young men who are involved in the community and religiously observant. Without scholarships, like those from Empower Illinois, families would have to go into an astronomical amount of debt. I'm a huge advocate for the Tax Credit Scholarship Program and am extremely grateful my family was able to benefit from it. I was in charge of my children for all these years, and knowing I had financial support from donors and the community was huge for me. I'm eternally grateful.

EMPOWER SCHOOLS

EMPOWER ILLINOIS IS FORTUNATE TO PARTNER WITH **92%** OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ILLINOIS TO OFFER APPLICANTS DIVERSE, QUALITY EDUCATION OPTIONS.



642

TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOOLS



\$6,600

AVERAGE SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT



430

SCHOOLS WITH SCHOLARSHIPS

STUDENTS APPLIED TO **601** SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE



14

AVERAGE NUMBER OF AWARDEES PER SCHOOL

39

AVERAGE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS PER SCHOOL

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

73

SCHOOLS RAISED ENOUGH FUNDS FOR THEIR ENTIRE WAITLIST

226

SCHOOLS INCREASED THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING A TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP

2.2X

DOLLARS DONATED TO FUND K-8 SCHOLARSHIPS VERSUS HIGH SCHOOL

CATHOLIC
JEWISH
LUTHERAN
ISLAMIC
CHRISTIAN
GREEK ORTHODOX
BAPTIST
MILITARY
STEM
ENTREPRENEURIAL
MONTESSORI
ARTS
SCIENCE
GIFTED
INDEPENDENT
SOCIAL JUSTICE
SECULAR
BILINGUAL
INTERNATIONAL
COLLEGE PREP
BOARDING

EMPOWER DONORS

EMPOWER ILLINOIS IS PROUD TO HAVE A BROAD BASE OF DONOR SUPPORT. DONATIONS ARE MADE BY ILLINOISANS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS WHO WANT TO SUPPORT THEIR LOCAL STUDENTS, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES.

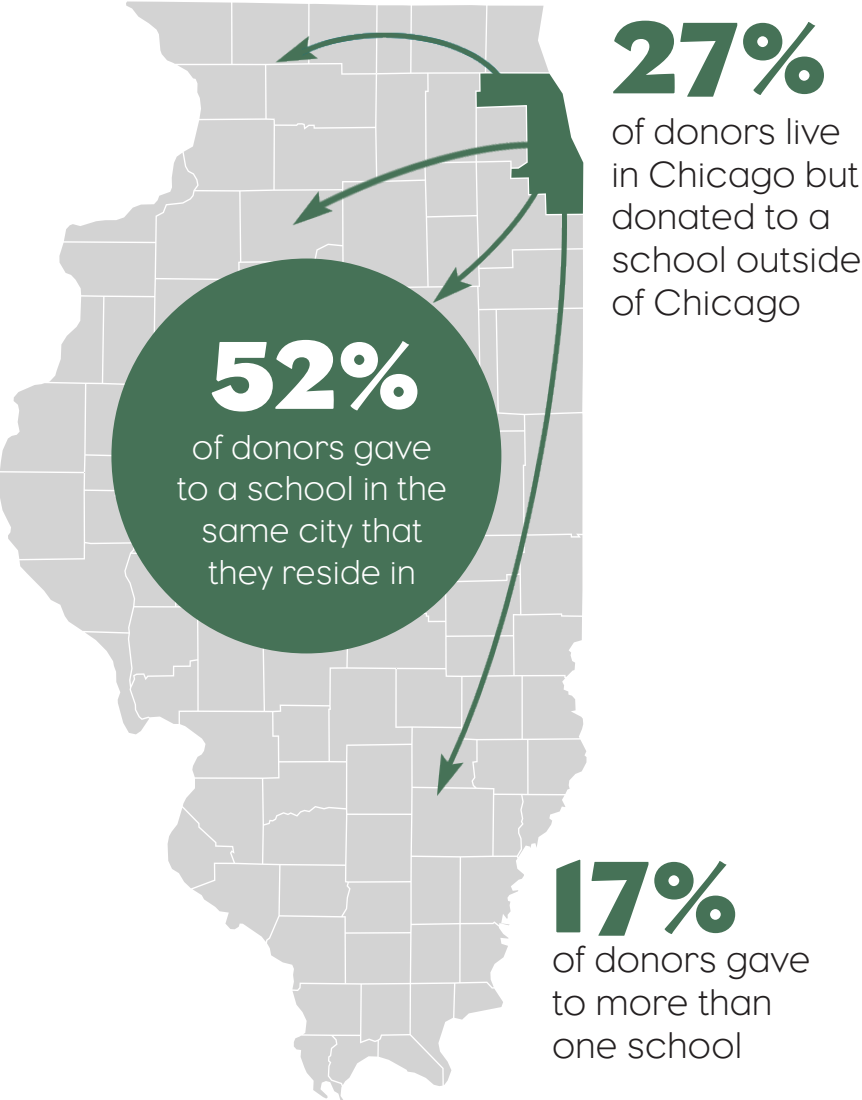
928
NEW DONORS

2,994
TOTAL DONORS

\$11,017
AVERAGE
DONATION

\$3,000
MEDIAN
DONATION

\$1,000
MOST COMMON
DONATION



DONOR SURVEY RESULTS

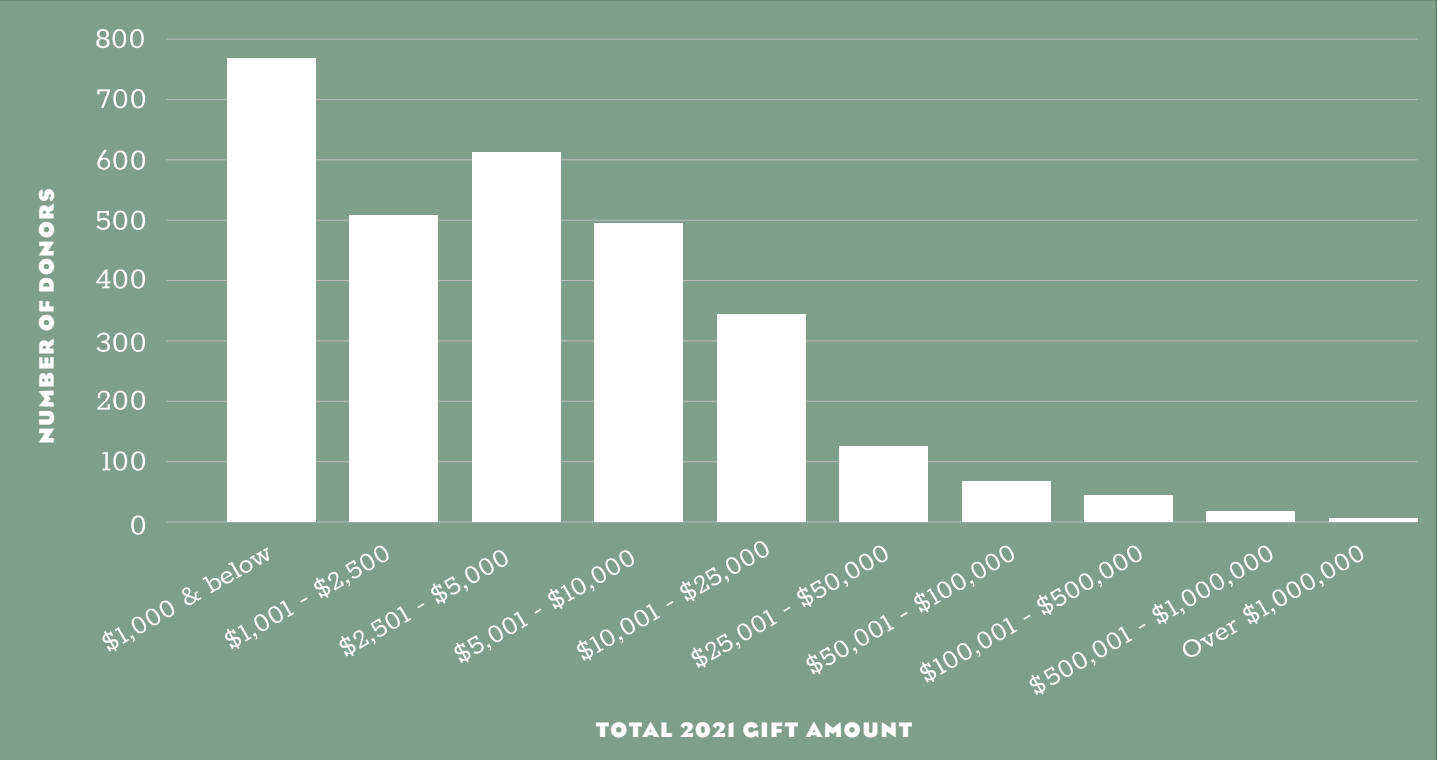
93%
OF DONORS INDICATED THEY PLANNED TO GIVE TO THE TCS PROGRAM AGAIN

46%
OF RETURNING DONORS INDICATED THAT THEY INCREASED THEIR DONATION TO THE TCS PROGRAM

82%
OF DONORS INDICATED THE TCS PROGRAM ALLOWED THEM TO INCREASE THEIR DONATIONS TO SCHOOLS WHERE THEY WERE PREVIOUSLY GIVING



DONATION BREAKDOWN



MATCHING GIFT PROGRAMS

EMPOWER ILLINOIS IS COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING SCHOOLS IN THEIR LOCAL FUNDRAISING AND DONOR DEVELOPMENT.

Matching gift challenges spark involvement and typically result in extremely successful school-based fundraising. Through partnerships with schools and at the wishes of individual donors, Empower Illinois is proud to have supported three matching gift programs this year, which provided an even greater number of students with scholarships. Individual schools also ran matching gift programs for the Tax Credit Scholarship Program with their donors.

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO SCHOOLS

Kicking off the year, the Archdiocese of Chicago and a group of generous donors partnered with Empower Illinois for a 2:1 matching gift challenge. The match sought to engage new donors to the Tax Credit Scholarship Program and raise money early in the year, so families would have early notice about their children's scholarships.

\$2,475,000

RAISED

\$1,055,934

EXCEEDED AVAILABLE MATCH

\$4,949,999

MATCHED

\$8,480,933

TOTAL CONTRIBUTED

1,280	109	472	197
SCHOLARSHIPS	PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	DONORS	NEW DONORS

Matching gift challenges spark involvement and typically result in extremely successful school-based fundraising.

REGIONS 4 AND 5 CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In the spring of 2021, an anonymous family generously sponsored a matching challenge for select Catholic schools in Regions 4 and 5. The match strategically engaged previously funded schools to cultivate their independent development skills and grow a new donor base.

\$630,000

RAISED

\$271,656

EXCEEDED AVAILABLE MATCH

\$630,000

MATCHED

\$1,531,656

TOTAL CONTRIBUTED

347	38	187	74
SCHOLARSHIPS	PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	DONORS	NEW DONORS

LAKE MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS (LMAIS)

In the spring of 2021, a generous donor sponsored a 1:1 matching gift challenge for high quality, independent schools. The LMAIS schools worked to leverage the opportunity to engage their school communities in raising significant scholarship donations.

\$666,666

RAISED

\$802,517

EXCEEDED AVAILABLE MATCH

\$666,666

MATCHED

\$2,135,849

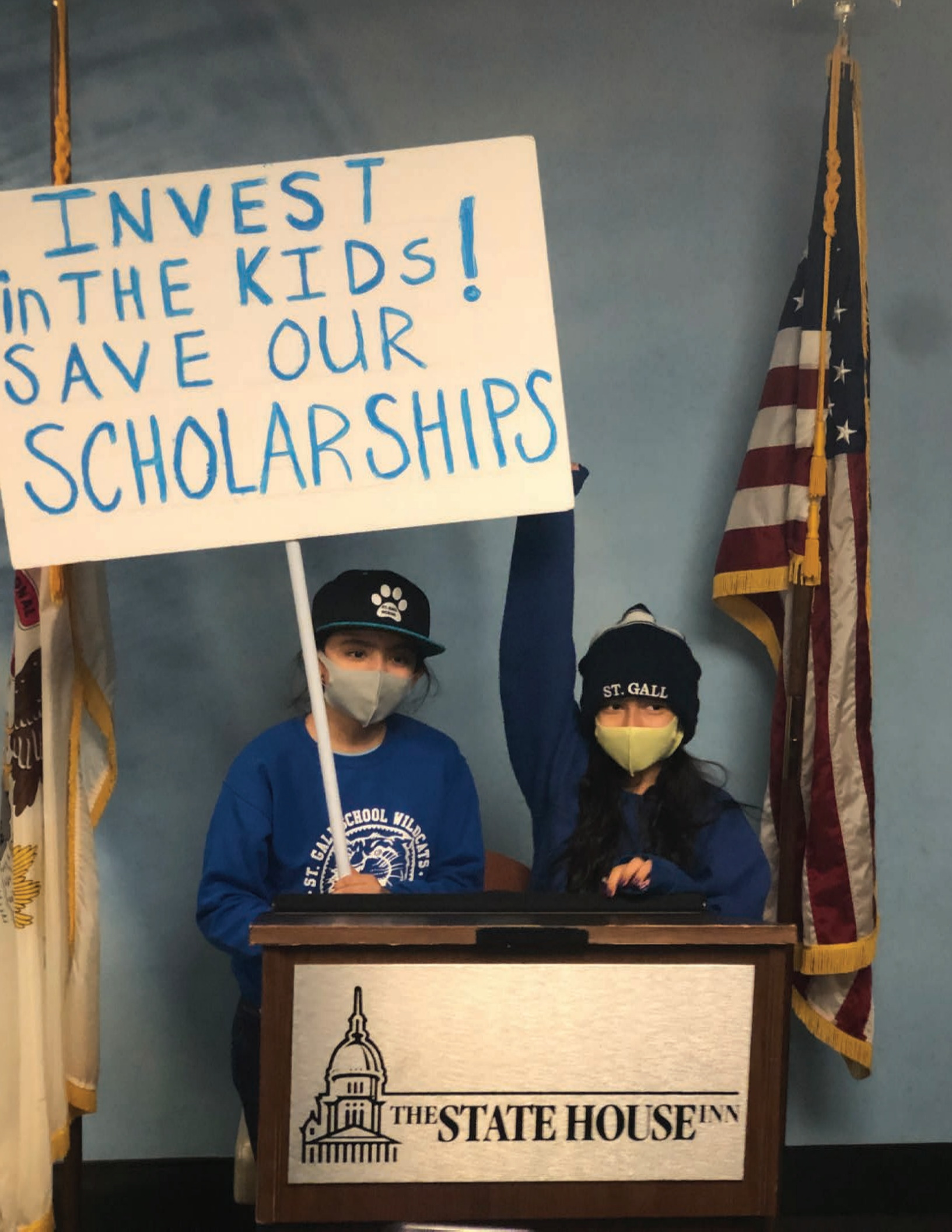
TOTAL CONTRIBUTED

160	36	50	14
SCHOLARSHIPS	PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	DONORS	NEW DONORS

**“EVERY ILLINOIS CHILD
WHO YEARNs FOR A
MORE EFFECTIVE, MORE
CHALLENGING SCHOOL
SHOULD BE ABLE TO AFFORD
AND ACHIEVE THAT DREAM.”**

CHICAGO TRIBUNE EDITORIAL BOARD, JUNE 2021





EMPOWER ADVOCACY

Engaging communities and empowering voices of parents, kids, and educators drive Empower Illinois' work. Our team recognizes that those most impacted by the life-changing potential of a tax credit scholarship must be central to any discussion about the program's impact and future. We are proud to have supported these critical perspectives through community nights, messages to legislators, and op-eds published across the state.



#SAVE MY SCHOLARSHIP

In February 2021, Governor Pritzker released his state budget, which once again included cuts to the Invest in Kids Tax Credit Scholarship Program. The program was labeled a "corporate loophole" by opponents, despite being funded by private citizens across the state and serving low-income and working-class families. The 7,000+ students who rely on a scholarship each year and the thousands more on the waitlist all saw their access to a best-fit school be put in jeopardy. During the challenging time of an ongoing pandemic, kids need more quality education options, not fewer.

Empower Illinois, under the #SaveMyScholarship campaign, led a grassroots coalition to fight against these threats. With daily trips to Springfield, calls and letters to elected officials, and stories from across the state, all lawmakers knew the importance and potential of this scholarship program for those children most in need. This broad coalition of kids and families, parents and private school communities, scholarship granting organizations, labor partners, and civic leaders from across the state worked tirelessly and for many months.

State lawmakers not only rejected the proposed cut, but also granted a one-year extension to the program. The entire Tax Credit Scholarship Community thanks all the elected officials who championed Illinois kids from low-income and working-class communities by protecting and expanding the Tax Credit Scholarship Program.

15,954

**LETTERS WRITTEN TO
ILLINOIS LEGISLATORS**

98%

**OF ILLINOIS LEGISLATORS
REACHED BY ADVOCATES**

5,167

**ADVOCATES CONTACTED
THEIR ILLINOIS LEGISLATORS**

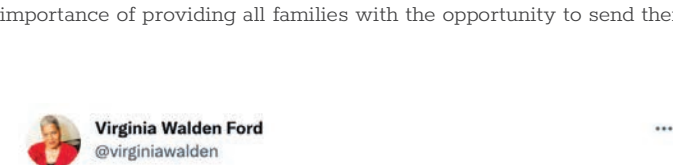
MISS VIRGINIA VISITS ILLINOIS

Virginia Walden Ford is one of America’s leading advocates for parent empowerment. As a student, a mother, an advocate, and a grandmother, Virginia has spent her lifetime fighting to create new educational opportunities for children and families. A native of Little Rock, she was among the first 130 students chosen to desegregate Little Rock’s high schools in the mid-1960s. Virginia formed a grassroots organization, D.C. Parents for School Choice, and with the support of national education organizations and lawmakers, Virginia and her courageous group of parent advocates succeeded in enacting the nation’s first-ever Opportunity Scholarship Program for low-income children. Her life and achievements were chronicled in the movie “Miss Virginia.”

When state leaders threatened the Tax Credit Scholarship Program again in 2021, Empower Illinois partnered with Virginia to share the importance of providing all families with the opportunity to send their

children to a best-fit school. Virginia hit the ground running by visiting students and teachers at St. Patrick’s Catholic School in Springfield. Virginia spent the next day at the State Capitol talking with parents, kids, and school leaders from across the state who were visiting their lawmakers in support of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program. She also set time aside to meet with state legislators to share her personal commitment to expanding education opportunities and encourage them to champion low-income and working-class families looking for opportunity in Illinois.

We are extremely grateful to Virginia for visiting and supporting Illinois families at such a critical juncture in the Tax Credit Scholarship Program’s lifetime.



"ACCESS TO MORE EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS FOR KIDS FROM EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD — FROM THE POOREST TO MOST AFFLUENT — IS SOMETHING THAT ULTIMATELY BENEFITS ALL CHILDREN AND THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY."

VIRGINIA WALDEN FORD

EMPOWER IN THE NEWS

EMPOWER ILLINOIS MADE LOCAL, NATIONAL, AND STATE HEADLINES IN 2021 AS THE MEDIA PUT A SPOTLIGHT ON THE TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

During 2021, Empower Illinois welcomed more champions and voices to the Tax Credit Scholarship Community. Most significantly, as tax credit scholarship advocates rallied to stave off proposed budget, the news media also took note of Empower Illinois’ work. Throughout the year, the Invest in Kids Act Tax Credit Scholarship Program and Empower Illinois were mentioned in over 310 local and national news stories. Advocates for the program penned op-eds, local radio stations highlighted participating schools that benefitted from TCS, and major TV stations showcased Illinois families looking for quality education options.

With increased attention on the benefits to kids and families across Illinois, media outlets throughout the state amplified voices that support the Tax Credit Scholarship Program. When faced with cuts, the Chicago Tribune Editorial Board encouraged state leaders to “Strengthen, rather than gut,” the Tax Credit Scholarship Program during the spring legislative session, and celebrated the expansion of the Invest in Kids Act with us in June. “[W]hen lawmakers do the right thing, as they did in the closing days of their spring session, we want to mass-circulate this thank-you note. We also want to congratulate all the parents who persuaded legislators not to abandon the bipartisan 2017 agreement that created this program. The Illinois General Assembly not only left the tax credit intact but extended and expanded Invest in Kids. Legislators delayed the scheduled sunset of the tax credit by one year, through December 2023.”

On a statewide scale, the Tax Credit Scholarship Program drew notice from outlets such as POLITICO and NPR Illinois. Outside of Illinois, publications including Forbes, The Wall Street Journal, and The National Review all highlighted the Tax Credit Scholarship Program in their coverage of school choice and learning options available to families as the COVID-19 pandemic continued for another year.

With national, statewide, and local coverage of the Tax Credit Scholarship Program on the rise, we are excited to continue growing awareness of this life-changing program

THE INVEST IN KIDS TCS PROGRAM WAS MENTIONED IN 2021 NEWS COVERAGE BY:

- ABC7 CHICAGO
- CAPITOL NEWS ILLINOIS
- CHALKBEAT CHICAGO
- CHICAGO SUN TIMES
- CHICAGO TRIBUNE
- CRAIN’S CHICAGO BUSINESS
- DAILY HERALD
- DEKALB DAILY CHRONICLE
- DIXON TELEGRAPH
- EFFINGHAM DAILY NEWS
- FORBES
- HERALD & REVIEW
- JACKSONVILLE JOURNAL COURIER
- KANKAKEE DAILY JOURNAL
- KTVI FOX 2 ST. LOUIS
- NATIONAL REVIEW
- NBC CHICAGO
- NORTHWEST HERALD
- QUINCY HERALD-WHIG
- ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR
- STATE JOURNAL REGISTER
- ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
- THE CENTER SQUARE
- THE DAILY LINE
- THE HERALD-NEWS
- THE NEWS GAZETTE
- THE PANTAGRAPH
- THE SOUTHERN ILLINOISAN
- WALL STREET JOURNAL
- WAND 17
- WBBM
- WCIA
- WGBZ
- WMAY
- WTTW

SCHOLARSHIP TAX CREDIT HELPS CLOSE EDUCATION GAP

“I think we all believe that a quality education is the foundation for future opportunities that can close the wealth gap in lifetime earnings for children from low and moderate income backgrounds. If you agree, write your state representative, your state senator, and Gov. Pritzker and tell them to retain the Invest in Kids scholarship tax credit as a tool for educational justice in the state of Illinois.”

Peter Gennuso, Schaumburg,
Published by Daily Herald

OP-ED: ILLINOIS’ LOW-INCOME SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM SHOULD BE SAVED



“We must do everything we can to advocate for the students who depend on this critical program. Because of Invest in Kids, many more parents throughout Illinois have a choice about how to educate their children. Because of Invest in Kids, thousands of kids can attend the school that’s right for them.”

State Representative Tom Demmer
Published by Chicago Tribune

FROM THE HEADLINES

SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS URGE SUPPORT FOR INVEST IN KIDS



“More than 7,000 students in need rely on these scholarships every year, and more than 22,000 scholarships have been awarded since the program began in 2018. Cuts to the program would cause uncertainty and education instability for participating families.”

Published by Riverbender

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR KIDS AREN’T CORPORATE LOOPHOLES

“In Illinois, we have chosen to demand better for our kids. The state’s Tax Credit Scholarship Program has allowed thousands of low-income and working-class students throughout the state to attend schools chosen by their family, regardless of their race, income, academic ability, or ZIP Code.”

Catholic Education Foundation, Crest Hill
Published by The Herald-News

LETTER: TAKING ADVANTAGE OF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

“In Illinois, we have chosen to demand better for our kids. The state’s Tax Credit Scholarship Program has allowed thousands of low-income and working-class students throughout the state to attend schools chosen by their family, regardless of their race, income, academic ability, or ZIP Code.”

Nick Blackburn, Decatur
Published by Herald & Review

EMPOWER POLICY AND RESEARCH

BUILDING RESILIENT SCHOOL SYSTEMS: AN EDUCATION FLEXIBILITY GUIDE FOR DISTRICT AND SCHOOL LEADERS

Empower Illinois has long been a champion for expanding access to learning opportunities for more students in Illinois, including the Untapped Potential Act, the Accelerated Placement Act, and the Invest in Kids Act. The unique challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic led our team to examine flexibility opportunities in education. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced every school in America into a remote learning setting. Since then, schools have adopted different approaches to adapt traditional learning during this time. This shift shined a spotlight on the need to rethink assumptions about how to deliver learning.

What can policymakers, school leaders, and families do to ensure that education systems are responsive to

student learning needs in any situation? Focus on building resilient systems for learning with students at the center. Next generation learning tailors a student’s educational experience to meet their unique strengths, interests, and needs. In addition, it provides opportunities for increased interaction with teachers and peers and grows student engagement. Next generation learning encourages students to play a greater role—and be more invested—in their learning.

Empower Illinois’ and ExcelinEd’s new research focuses on identifying and describing the types of flexibilities available within Illinois. Read the full report on our website at empowerillinois.org/engage/research.

APRIL 2021 POLLING

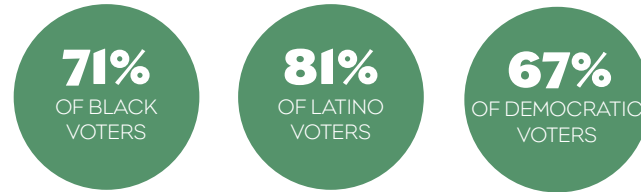
Empower Illinois designed and released a poll of Illinois voter opinions on the Tax Credit Scholarship Program in April 2021. The results showed growing and large majority support for the bipartisan Tax Credit Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships to students from low-income and working-class families to attend their best fit school.

Key findings in the poll results include:

Overall, 61% of Illinois voters support the bipartisan Invest in Kids Tax Credit Scholarship Program



Demographic breakdown:



Additionally, the poll asked voters about a then-proposed cut to the Tax Credit Scholarship Program, which would have caused instability for participating families. Opponents labeled the program as a “corporate loophole,” despite its purpose to serve low-income and working-class families. When asked about this proposed cut, voters demonstrated strong opposition.

- 60% of voters oppose Governor Pritzker’s proposed cuts to the Invest in Kids Tax Credit Scholarship Program, including 63% of Black voters and 66% of Latino voters
- 45% of voters indicated they would be less likely to vote for their state representative or senator if they supported the Governor’s proposed cut
- Only 19% of voters would be more likely to vote for their state representative or senator’s reelection if they supported the Governor’s proposed cut



EMPOWER VISION

MORE CERTAINTY

The Invest in Kids Act Tax Credit Scholarship Program is a vital lifeline to so many kids seeking their best fit school, a quality education, and a bright future. This is their program, and we have more work to do to make sure that civic leaders and lawmakers advocate for policy changes that make this program even more effective and lasting.

MORE SCHOLARSHIPS

With five times more tax credit scholarship applicants than we can fund, and the ability for the Tax Credit Scholarship Program to raise \$100M annually statewide, we have more work to do to reach our fundraising goals and provide life-changing scholarships to as many kids as possible.

MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR KIDS

As we provide more scholarships and more certainty for kids and families in Illinois, their future opportunities grow exponentially. Whether they discover a new passion, excel academically, find a safe environment, or make the varsity team for their favorite sport, being at their best-fit school prepares kids for whatever they want to be. We are proud to play a small part in building a pathway to success.



Thank you for helping me grow!

THANK YOU DONORS

TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM DONORS

Thank you to our Tax Credit Scholarship donors championing education opportunities for all kids. Your commitment has increased access to quality education for kids who need it most and transformed thousands of lives.

EMPOWER ILLINOIS PROGRAM AND OPERATIONS DONORS

Thank you to our charitable donors. Your generosity has funded the policy advancement and advocacy activities that make sweeping educational change possible. Empower Illinois' innovative technology, media and marketing work, and grassroots organizing would not be possible without your support.

Jeff Aeder
American Federation for Children
Anonymous
Peter and Beth Bensen
Janet Brakel
Charles and Mary Anne Bobrinskoy
John and Rita Canning
Michael and Deena Ciavarella
CME Group Foundation
Kent and Elizabeth Dauten
James and Catherine Denny
Michael Dorf
Geno and Paula Fernandez
Paul and Mary Finnegan
Patrick Fisher
Lucia Glunz
Ward and Marjorie Hamm
Norma Hnilo
Mark and Mary Hoppe
Michael and Lindy Keiser
Chris and JoAnn Killackey

Kirkland & Ellis Foundation
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