WHEREAS, increasing a community's educational attainment, particularly completion of credentials and degrees after high school, correlates with increased employment, earnings, civic participation, and life expectancy, along with lower levels of poverty, crime, and obesity; and,

WHEREAS, Illinois has a goal of increasing the proportion of adults with a high-quality postsecondary credential to 60 percent by 2025 and reducing educational achievement gaps that are associated with income and race; and,

WHEREAS, students and their families are sometimes unaware of the postsecondary options and financial aid available to them, and they can benefit from guidance through the process of choosing and applying to college and applying for financial aid; and,

WHEREAS, providing students with college planning and financial aid counseling can help ensure that all high school seniors have the opportunity to continue their education if they choose; such guidance can assist students in enrolling in a school that fits their needs and goals, can minimize student debt, and can maximize the chance for completing a degree or certificate program; and,

WHEREAS, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) will be available on October 1, 2017, for students to apply for aid for the 2018-19 academic year; filing this single application allows a student to be considered for the federal Pell Grant, the state MAP Grant, work-study opportunities, federal student loans, and more; and,

WHEREAS, the mission of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) is to help make college accessible and affordable for Illinois students; to help accomplish this, ISAC provides free assistance with college planning and financial aid to Illinois students so that they can better access financial aid and make more informed choices when choosing a postsecondary path; and,

WHEREAS, ISAC and members of the agency's Illinois Student Assistance Corps (ISACorps) of near-peer mentors will work with high schools, community organizations, and other partners to deliver an intensive schedule of free college application and financial aid workshops and events throughout October, including FAFSA® completion workshops and one-on-one assistance, to help students meet their educational and career goals:

THEREFORE, I, Bruce Rauner, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim October 2017 as COLLEGE CHANGES EVERYTHING® MONTH in Illinois, and encourage students and families to take full advantage of the financial aid and college planning resources available in their communities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Illinois to be affixed.

Done at the Capitol in the City of Springfield, this FOURTEENTH day of SEPTEMBER, in the Year of Our Lord, two thousand and SEVENTEEN, and of the State of Illinois, one hundred and NINETY-NINTH.

[Signature]
SECRETARY OF STATE

[Signature]
GOVERNOR