

Development of Higher Education in Prison (HEP) in Illinois

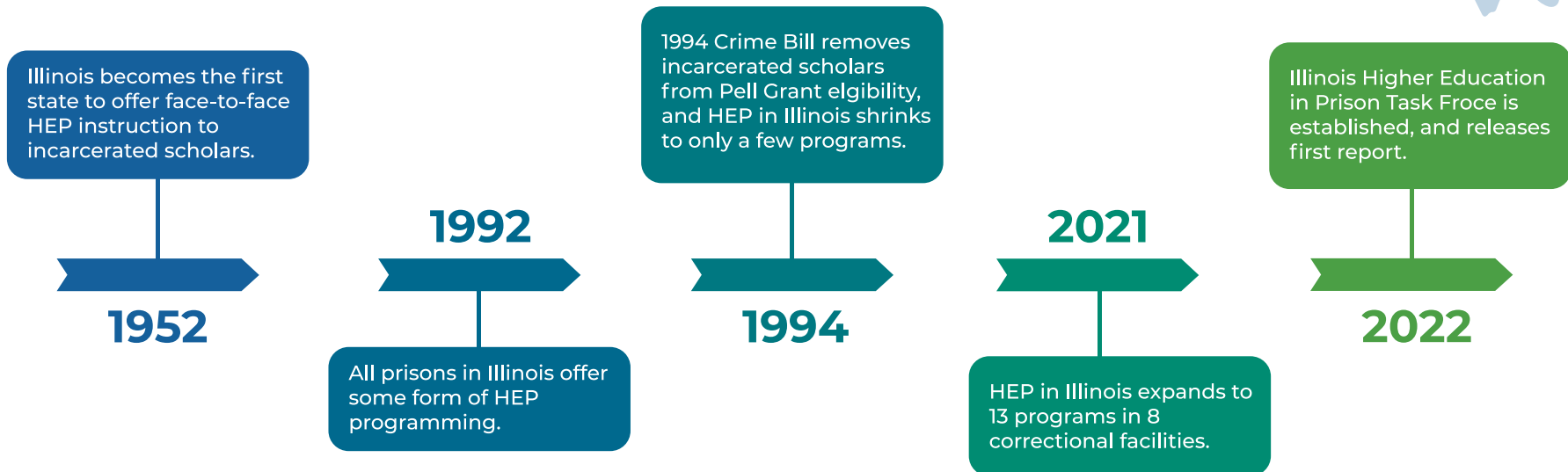
Illinois has a history of standing on the forefront of prison reform. Keeping with this tradition, in 1952, our state became the first to offer face-to-face higher education in prison to incarcerated scholars. A political movement supporting HEP grew in Illinois in the following decades, and by 1992, all prisons in Illinois offered some form of HEP programming. Unfortunately, the 1994 Crime Bill removed Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated scholars, and in Illinois, by the early 2000's, HEP programming had shrunk to a small number of vocational programs.¹

Reestablishing Education as a Human Right for All in Illinois

Recently, recognition of the lack of humanity in the corrections system and the benefits of HEP has grown, and in Illinois, eight new HEP programs have been established in the last 7 years. Nonetheless, only 8 out of 28 Illinois' correctional facilities have HEP programming, and we know that this is not enough. We must continue to fight to expand HEP in Illinois in order to create a system that is more humane, protects human rights, and leads to sustainable growth in incarcerated individuals and their communities.¹



Major Turning Points of HEP in Illinois (1952-2022)



¹ Ewulomi Marsheda, and Ashton Hoselton, 2021. Higher Education in Prison.