

By: Fleming

To: Universities and  
Colleges;  
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 99

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR PERSONS HAVING  
2 A DEBILITATING DISEASE; TO REQUIRE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS TO  
3 INCLUDE MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION CONCERNING THE APPLICANT'S DEBILITY;  
4 TO PROVIDE THAT SCHOLARSHIPS MAY BE AWARDED TO BOTH FULL-TIME AND  
5 PART-TIME STUDENTS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE  
6 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING SHALL BE THE ADMINISTERING AGENCY  
7 OF THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH THE DEBILITATING DISEASE  
8 SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN THE STATE TREASURY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

10 SECTION 1. (1) There is created a special scholarship  
11 program for persons having a debilitating disease. The purpose of  
12 the program is to help eligible residents of Mississippi to obtain  
13 a postsecondary certificate or degree at a state institution of  
14 higher learning or a public community or junior college in  
15 Mississippi when such persons, because of their debility,  
16 otherwise might not be able to further their education.

17 (2) Any legal resident of the state who has a debilitating  
18 disease and who is enrolled in or accepted for enrollment at a  
19 state institution of higher learning or a public community or  
20 junior college in Mississippi may apply for a scholarship under  
21 this program. An application must be accompanied by written  
22 medical documentation from a licensed physician describing the  
23 nature of the applicant's debilitating disease, the estimated  
24 extent of the applicant's debility, a prognosis for recovery and

25 any other information that may be required pursuant to rules or  
26 regulations established under subsection (6) of this section.

27 (3) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
28 Learning shall establish the maximum annual award that may be made  
29 under the scholarship program, which may not exceed the cost of  
30 tuition at the institution or college at which the student is  
31 enrolled. Both full-time and part-time students may apply for  
32 awards under the program. Students enrolling on a full-time basis  
33 may receive a maximum of four (4) annual awards or, in those  
34 instances when a degree program requires five (5) years for  
35 completion, five (5) annual awards. The number of awards which  
36 may be made to a student attending school on a part-time basis may  
37 not exceed the length of time required to complete the associate  
38 or baccalaureate degree or certificate program toward which the  
39 student is working. A person who has a baccalaureate degree is  
40 not eligible for a scholarship under the program, and any person  
41 who has an associate degree may receive awards only in furtherance  
42 of a baccalaureate degree.

43 (4) For the purpose of establishing the eligibility of  
44 applicants for scholarships under the program, the Board of  
45 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning jointly with the  
46 State Board for Community and Junior Colleges shall define the  
47 term "debilitating disease" and shall establish objective criteria  
48 for determining whether an applicant's physical debility qualifies  
49 the applicant for a scholarship. The definition and criteria  
50 shall be included in the rules and regulations established under  
51 subsection (6) of this section.

52 (5) As a condition for renewal of a scholarship, a student  
53 must make steady academic progress toward a certificate or  
54 associate or baccalaureate degree, as certified by the  
55 institution's registrar, and must maintain a cumulative grade

56 point average of at least 2.00 calculated on a 4.00 scale at the  
57 end of each term.

58 (6) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
59 Learning and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges  
60 jointly shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry  
61 out the purposes and intent of this section. The Board of  
62 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall be the  
63 administering agency of the program.

64 (7) It is the intent of the Legislature to fully fund  
65 scholarships to eligible students under this program. If funds  
66 are insufficient to fully fund scholarships to all eligible  
67 applicants, the board shall award the scholarships to first-time  
68 students on a first-come, first-serve basis; however, priority  
69 consideration must be given to persons previously receiving awards  
70 under the program who are making steady academic progress toward  
71 completion of a certificate program or associate or baccalaureate  
72 degree.

73 SECTION 2. There is established in the State Treasury a  
74 special fund to be known as the "Debilitating Disease Scholarship  
75 Fund." The fund shall consist of all monies appropriated to the  
76 fund by the Legislature and any gifts, grants or donations that  
77 may be received from any source, public or private. Monies in the  
78 fund shall be used only for the purpose of awarding scholarships  
79 under the program established in Section 1 of this act. Interest  
80 earned on the investment of monies in the fund shall be returned  
81 and deposited to the credit of the fund.

82 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
83 and after July 1, 2000.