HOUSE BILL NO. 245

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2001

By: Representative Fleming
To: Universities and Colleges; Appropriations

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

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

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

(2) Any legal resident of the state who has a debilitating disease and who is enrolled in or accepted for enrollment at a state institution of higher learning or a public community or junior college in Mississippi may apply for a scholarship under this program. An application must be accompanied by written medical documentation from a licensed physician describing the nature of the applicant's debilitating disease, the estimated extent of the applicant's debility, a prognosis for recovery and any other information that may be required pursuant to rules or regulations established under subsection (6) of this section.

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

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

(5) As a condition for renewal of a scholarship, a student
must make steady academic progress toward a certificate or
associate or baccalaureate degree, as certified by the
institution’s registrar, and must maintain a cumulative grade
point average of at least 2.00 calculated on a 4.00 scale at the
end of each term.

(6) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
Learning and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges
jointly shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry
out the purposes and intent of this section. The Board of
Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall be the
administering agency of the program.
(7) It is the intent of the Legislature to fully fund scholarships to eligible students under this program. If funds are insufficient to fully fund scholarships to all eligible applicants, the board shall award the scholarships to first-time students on a first-come, first-served basis; however, priority consideration must be given to persons previously receiving awards under the program who are making steady academic progress toward completion of a certificate program or associate or baccalaureate degree.

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

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.