MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION 2001

By: Senator(s) Chamberlin  
To: Education; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2164

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A TEACHER RETENTION SCHOLARSHIP GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE THAT SCHOLARSHIPS SHALL BE AVAILABLE TO TEACHERS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE STATE WORKING TOWARD A MASTER’S OR DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION DEGREE; TO PLACE SUBSEQUENT SCHOOL DISTRICT EMPLOYMENT AS A CONDITION FOR RECEIPT OF THE SCHOLARSHIP; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) There is established the Teacher Retention Grant Program within the State Department of Education. The purposes of the program shall be to retain the qualified teachers already serving as licensed teachers by making available scholarships to persons working towards a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree at an institution of higher learning whose teacher education program is approved by the State Board of Education.

(2) Any institution of higher learning in the State of Mississippi which offers a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree may apply to the department for participation in the program.

(3) The State Department of Education shall provide funds to participating institutions of higher learning for the purpose of awarding scholarships to licensed teachers currently employed by a school district in Mississippi and pursuing a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist degree or a Doctor of Education degree at such institutions while continuing to render service to the state as a licensed teacher in a school district located in the state. The financial scholarship shall be applied to the total cost for tuition, books, materials and fees at the institution in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed an...
amount equal to the highest total cost of tuition, books,  
materials and fees assessed by a state institution of higher  
learning during that school year.

(4) Students awarded financial scholarships under the  
Teacher Retention Grant Program may receive such awards for a  
maximum of four (4) school years; however, the maximum number of  
awards which may be made shall not exceed the length of time  
required to complete the number of academic hours necessary to  
obtain a Master of Education degree, an Educational Specialist  
degree or a Doctor of Education degree. Financial scholarships  
under the program shall not be based upon an applicant's  
eligibility for financial aid.

(5) Subject to the availability of funds, the State Board of  
Education may provide for professional development and support  
services as may be necessary for the retention of teachers  
participating in the program.

(6) Any person participating in the program who fails to  
complete a program of study that will enable that person to obtain  
a Master of Education degree, Educational Specialist degree or  
Doctor of Education degree shall become liable immediately to the  
State Board of Education for the sum of all awards made to that  
person under the program, plus interest accruing at the current  
Stafford Loan rate at the time the person abrogates his  
participation in the program.

(7) As a condition for participation in the program, a  
teacher shall agree to continued employment as a licensed teacher  
in a school district located in the state, for a period of not  
less than three (3) years which shall follow those years of  
service rendered while obtaining the Master of Education degree,  
Educational Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree.  
However, for any person who obtained a baccalaureate degree in  
education with a financial scholarship under the Critical Needs  
Teacher Scholarship Program and who entered the Teacher Retention
Grant Program before rendering service as a teacher, the period of employment for the purposes of this subsection shall be two (2) years, in addition to the employment commitment required under the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program. Service rendered by a participant as a licensed teacher in a school district in this state before that teacher becomes a participant in the program may not be considered to fulfill the employment commitment required under this subsection. Any person failing to comply with this employment commitment in any required school year shall immediately be in breach of contract and become liable immediately to the State Department of Education for the sum of all scholarships awarded to that person, less one-third (1/3) of the amount of that sum for each year that service was rendered, or for those persons whose required period of employment is two (2) years, less one-half (1/2) of the amount of that sum for each year that service was rendered, plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate at the time the breach occurs, except in the case of a deferral for cause by the State Board of Education when there is no employment position immediately available upon the teacher's obtaining of the Master of Education degree, Educational Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree. After the period of such deferral, the person shall resume the required teaching duties or shall become liable to the board under this subsection. If a claim for repayment under this subsection is placed in the hands of an attorney for collection after default, then the obligor shall be liable for an additional amount equal to a reasonable attorney's fee.

(8) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the proper administration of the Teacher Retention Grant Program.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.