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. 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 may be used solely 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 must 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, 2002.