

By: Representative Fleming

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 137

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR A TUITION WAIVER PROGRAM FOR PERSONS
2 HAVING A DEBILITATING DISEASE; TO REQUIRE WAIVER APPLICATIONS TO
3 INCLUDE MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION CONCERNING THE APPLICANT'S DEBILITY;
4 TO PROVIDE THAT WAIVERS 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 FOR THE PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

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

26 (3) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
27 Learning shall establish the maximum annual tuition waiver that
28 may be awarded under the program, which may not exceed the cost of
29 tuition at the institution or college at which the student is

30 enrolled. Both full-time and part-time students may apply for
31 tuition waivers. Students enrolling on a full-time basis may
32 receive a maximum of four (4) annual awards or, in those instances
33 when a degree program requires five (5) years for completion, five
34 (5) annual awards. The number of awards which may be made to a
35 student attending school on a part-time basis may not exceed the
36 length of time required to complete the associate or baccalaureate
37 degree or certificate program toward which the student is working.
38 A person who has a baccalaureate degree is not eligible for a
39 tuition waiver, and any person who has an associate degree may
40 receive awards only in furtherance of a baccalaureate degree.

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

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

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

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

71 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
72 and after July 1, 2005.