

By: Representatives Cockerham, Bondurant,
Whittington, Stringer, Warren, Baker (74th),
Smith (59th), Mayo, Scott, Clark

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1465
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL PHYSICIANS
2 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM AND COMMISSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECRUITING
3 AND TRAINING QUALIFIED PERSONS TO PRACTICE MEDICINE IN RURAL AREAS
4 OF THE STATE; TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL PHYSICIANS
5 SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH A
6 BOARD FOR THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL PHYSICIANS SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION
7 AND TO PRESCRIBE ITS POWERS AND DUTIES; TO PROVIDE THAT THE
8 COMMISSION SHALL BE HOUSED IN THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT THE
9 UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER; TO PRESCRIBE THE
10 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS SEEKING ENTRY
11 INTO THE PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROCESS IN
12 CONJUNCTION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
13 WHICH WOULD FACILITATE EARLY ADMISSION OF QUALIFIED PROGRAM
14 PARTICIPANTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE;
15 TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMISSION TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO
16 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN UNDERGRADUATE AND MEDICAL SCHOOL AND
17 RESIDENCY; TO REQUIRE MEDICAL SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS TO ENTER AND
18 COMPLETE FAMILY MEDICINE OR OTHER GENERALIST RESIDENCY PROGRAMS;
19 TO REQUIRE PARTICIPANTS TO PRACTICE MEDICINE AS FAMILY PHYSICIANS
20 OR OTHER GENERALIST PHYSICIANS IN A RURAL OR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL
21 SHORTAGE AREA OR MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AREA OF THE STATE FOR THE
22 NUMBER OF YEARS, NOT TO EXCEED FIVE, WHICH CORRESPONDS TO THE
23 NUMBER OF YEARS THAT THE PARTICIPANT RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
24 THROUGH THE PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE PARTICIPANTS WHO FAIL TO COMPLETE
25 THEIR FAMILY MEDICINE OR GENERALIST RESIDENCY AND PRACTICE
26 OBLIGATIONS TO REPAY, ON A PRO RATA BASIS, ANY FINANCIAL
27 ASSISTANCE RECEIVED THROUGH THE PROGRAM PLUS PENALTIES; TO REQUIRE
28 THE COMMISSION TO ENDEAVOR TO ESTABLISH AN INITIAL PRACTICE ENTRY
29 SUPPORT SYSTEM; TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION AND ITS BOARD HAVE
30 NO AUTHORITY OVER ANY PROGRAMS OTHER THAN THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL
31 PHYSICIANS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

33 **SECTION 1.** There is established the Mississippi Rural
34 Physicians Scholarship Program for the purpose of identifying and
35 recruiting qualified university and college students from rural
36 areas of the state for medical or osteopathic school
37 matriculation. The program shall consist of three (3) distinct
38 phases through which participants will progress, including:

- 39 (a) Undergraduate premedical education;
40 (b) Medical or osteopathic school and residency; and

41 (c) Post-residency entry into medical practice in a
42 rural or underserved area of the State of Mississippi.

43 **SECTION 2.** (1) The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
44 Program shall be administered by a commission to be known as the
45 "Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Commission." The
46 commission shall be directed by a board composed of the following
47 members:

48 (a) Two (2) generalist physicians appointed by and from
49 the membership of the Mississippi State Medical Association, the
50 term of which shall be three (3) years and may be reappointed for
51 one (1) additional term;

52 (b) One (1) generalist physician appointed by and from
53 the membership of each of the following organizations, the term of
54 which shall be three (3) years and may be reappointed for one (1)
55 additional term:

56 (i) Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians;

57 (ii) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
58 Physicians;

59 (iii) Mississippi Chapter, American Academy of
60 Pediatrics;

61 (iv) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
62 OB-GYN;

63 (v) Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association;

64 (vi) Mississippi Osteopathic Association;

65 (c) Two (2) designees of the Dean of the University of
66 Mississippi School of Medicine whose terms are at the discretion
67 of the dean, at least one (1) of whom is a member of the
68 University of Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee;

69 (d) Two (2) medical students, one (1) of whom shall be
70 selected yearly through a process developed by the dean of the
71 School of Medicine in consultation with the chairs of the
72 departments of family medicine, internal medicine, OB-GYN, and
73 pediatrics, and one (1) of whom shall be nominated for a one-year

74 term by the Mississippi Chapter of the Student National Medical
75 Association and approved by the Dean of the University of
76 Mississippi School of Medicine;

77 (e) A member of the Board of Trustees of State
78 Institutions of Higher Learning; and

79 (f) The Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at
80 the University of Mississippi School of Medicine.

81 (2) The premedical advisors from the accredited four-year
82 colleges and universities in the state and the directors or
83 designees of the primary care generalist training programs in the
84 State of Mississippi shall comprise an advisory committee to the
85 commission to assist the commission in its administration of the
86 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program.

87 (3) Vacancies on the commission must be filled in a manner
88 consistent with the original appointments.

89 (4) All appointments to the commission must be made no later
90 than September 1, 2007. After the members are appointed, the
91 Chair of the Department of Family Medicine shall set a date for
92 the organizational meeting that is mutually acceptable to the
93 majority of the commission members. The organizational meeting
94 shall be for the purposes of organizing the commission and
95 establishing rules for transacting its business. A majority of
96 the members of the commission shall constitute a quorum at all
97 commission meetings. An affirmative vote of a majority of the
98 members present and voting shall be required in the adoption of
99 rules, reports and in any other actions taken by the commission.
100 At the organizational meeting, the commission shall elect a chair
101 and vice chair from the members appointed according to paragraphs
102 (a) through (d) of subsection (1). The chair shall serve for a
103 term of two (2) years, upon the expiration of which the vice chair
104 shall assume the office of chair.

105 (5) After the organizational meeting, the commission shall
106 hold no less than two (2) meetings annually.

107 (6) The commission may form an executive committee for the
108 purpose of transacting business that must be conducted before the
109 next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission. All actions
110 taken by the executive committee must be ratified by the
111 commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

112 (7) Members of the commission shall serve without
113 compensation but may be reimbursed, subject to the availability of
114 funding, for mileage and actual and necessary expenses incurred in
115 attending meetings of the commission.

116 (8) Funding for the establishment and continued operation of
117 the program and commission shall be appropriated out of any money
118 in the General Fund not already appropriated to the University of
119 Mississippi Medical Center.

120 **SECTION 3.** The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
121 Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

122 (a) Developing the administrative policy for the
123 commission and the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
124 Program;

125 (b) Promulgating rules and regulations, with the advice
126 and consent of the University of Mississippi Medical Center,
127 pertaining to the implementation and operation of the Rural
128 Physicians Scholarship Program;

129 (c) Developing and implementing strategies and
130 activities for the identification and recruitment of students and
131 for marketing the program and for the implementation of the
132 program. In developing these strategies, the board shall seek the
133 input of various organizations and entities, including the
134 Mississippi State Medical Association, the Mississippi Academy of
135 Family Physicians, the Mississippi Chapters of the American
136 College of Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the
137 American College of OB-GYN, the Mississippi Medical and Surgical
138 Association and the Mississippi Osteopathic Medicine Association;

139 (d) Establishing a budget, with the advice and consent
140 of the University of Mississippi Medical Center, to support the
141 activities of the program and periodically reviewing and if
142 appropriate, revising, the scholarship and other stipends offered
143 through the program;

144 (e) Advising the University of Mississippi Medical
145 Center regarding hiring an executive director and support staff
146 necessary for the commission's work. The commission shall
147 nominate at least two (2) individuals to serve as executive
148 director;

149 (f) Reviewing participants progress in the program and
150 mentoring students and physicians participating in the program;

151 (g) Developing and participating in programs that
152 provide initial practice support in collaboration with other
153 interested professional organizations;

154 (h) The commission shall have the authority through use
155 of generally applicable definitions, to designate an area of the
156 state as underserved or rural. The method by which these
157 designations shall be made shall be contained in rules and
158 regulations promulgated by the commission.

159 **SECTION 4.** (1) The commission shall develop and implement
160 policies and procedures designed to recruit, identify and enroll
161 undergraduate students who demonstrate necessary interest,
162 commitment, aptitude and academic achievement to pursue careers as
163 family physicians or other generalist physicians in rural or
164 medically underserved areas of Mississippi, and to develop and
165 implement the programs designed to foster successful entry of
166 participants into medical school, completion of medical school,
167 enrollment into and completion of family medicine or other
168 generalist residency, and establishment and maintenance of a
169 career in family medicine or other generalist specialty in a rural
170 or underserved area of Mississippi.

171 (2) The commission shall have the authority through use of
172 generally applicable definitions, to designate an area of the
173 state as underserved or rural.

174 (3) The commission, in conjunction with the University of
175 Mississippi Medical Center, shall have the authority to provide
176 students selected for scholarship funding with faculty mentors and
177 other programs designed to enhance the students' likelihood of
178 admission to the medical school. The commission and the
179 University of Mississippi Medical Center will develop coursework
180 that will provide scholarship students with the skills necessary
181 for sustained and successful medical practice in rural
182 Mississippi.

183 (4) Each applicant for admission to the program must submit
184 an application to the commission that conforms to requirements
185 established by the commission.

186 (5) In selecting participants for the program, the board may
187 only accept an applicant if his or her academic record and other
188 characteristics, if given consideration by the University of
189 Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee, would be
190 considered credible and competitive.

191 (6) An applicant for the program may be admitted only upon a
192 majority vote of the members of the commission.

193 (7) Up to fifteen (15) students will be admitted to the
194 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program each year,
195 beginning with the 2008-2009 academic year.

196 **SECTION 5.** (1) Participants must adhere to the policies and
197 practices as stipulated by the commission to continue in the
198 program.

199 (2) Students in the program may receive tuition or other
200 financial support that may be provided by the commission. If a
201 student in the program is admitted to and completes medical or
202 osteopathic school, any tuition or other educational and living
203 support provided to the student by the commission will be

204 forgiven. However, if the student is not successful in being
205 accepted into medical or osteopathic school within three (3) years
206 of entry into the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
207 Program, or if the student otherwise breaches his or her agreement
208 with the commission, all financial assistance provided to the
209 student must be repaid according to policies adopted by the board.

210 **SECTION 6.** (1) Students in the program may apply to any
211 medical or osteopathic school that is accredited by the Liaison
212 Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or the American Osteopathic
213 Association (AOA).

214 (2) Students in the program seeking admission to the
215 University of Mississippi School of Medicine shall be eligible for
216 a special admissions process pursuant to criteria established by
217 the School of Medicine Admissions Committee which will include
218 special consideration of the attributes of participation in the
219 program.

220 (3) In carrying out the admissions process developed for the
221 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program participants
222 under this section, the goal is for the program to work with the
223 School of Medicine to enhance the capability of participants to
224 successfully enter and complete medical school, train in family
225 medicine or other generalist primary care specialty and enter
226 practice in rural or underserved areas in Mississippi. To the
227 extent feasible, the early admissions process should be completed
228 before November 1 of the year preceding a student's admission to
229 medical school.

230 **SECTION 7.** (1) Subject to the availability of funding,
231 students in the program who successfully matriculate to medical or
232 osteopathic school are eligible for ongoing financial support in
233 accordance with policies and requirements of the commission and in
234 accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. The number
235 of students to be supported at the University of Mississippi

236 School of Medicine and at other schools will be established by
237 policy prescribed by the commission.

238 (2) Subject to the availability of funding, students
239 enrolled at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine may
240 receive tuition support, funding to assist with the cost of books
241 and a living stipend, as prescribed by policy of the commission
242 and in accordance with applicable regulations. Preferences for
243 ongoing funding must be given to those students admitted to the
244 University of Mississippi School of Medicine.

245 (3) For each year that a student in medical or osteopathic
246 school receives financial assistance, the student is obligated for
247 one (1) year of practice as a primary care physician in a rural or
248 underserved area in Mississippi. Breach of the agreement at any
249 stage of training shall invoke the repayment of all financial
250 assistance provided to the student through the Mississippi Rural
251 Physicians Scholarship Program, including assistance provided
252 during undergraduate school, as well as in medical or osteopathic
253 school, along with other penalties that may be prescribed in
254 policy by the commission.

255 **SECTION 8.** Medical and osteopathic students in the program
256 must enter family medicine or other generalist residency programs
257 according to their choice of specialty. Depending upon the
258 availability of funds, students who successfully enter residency
259 programs which have been approved by the commission may receive
260 further financial support from the Mississippi Rural Physicians
261 Scholarship Program subject to applicable rules and policies of
262 the commission. All funding for financial support from the
263 commission to participants during their residency must be
264 disbursed in accordance with applicable regulations.

265 **SECTION 9.** (1) Upon completion of residency, a participant
266 in the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program must
267 proceed to enter the practice of medicine in a rural or
268 underserved area in Mississippi, as defined by the commission and

269 consistent with generally acceptable designations. If an area
270 experiences significant changes in its medical or general
271 community which are not reflected by health professional shortage
272 area (HPSA) or medically underserved area (MUA) rural designation,
273 the commission may receive testimony and, in its discretion, may
274 qualify the area as an underserved or rural area to allow the
275 program participant to fulfill his or her practice obligation.

276 (2) Upon entering the practice of medicine, a participant in
277 the program must serve in a health professional shortage area
278 (HPSA), medically underserved area (MUA), or rural area otherwise
279 approved for practice under subsection (1) of this section for a
280 number of years which corresponds to the number of years, not to
281 exceed five (5), for which the participant received funding
282 through the program. A participant who completes residency
283 outside the State of Mississippi who fails to enter the practice
284 of medicine as required under this section shall be deemed in
285 breach of contract and shall be liable for the immediate repayment
286 of all financial assistance provided to the participant through
287 the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program, including
288 assistance provided during undergraduate school, as well as in
289 medical or osteopathic school, along with other penalties that may
290 be prescribed in policy by the board. Any participant who fails
291 to complete the period of practice for which he or she is
292 obligated to provide services in a health professional shortage
293 area (HPSA) or a medically underserved area (MUA) in exchange for
294 financial assistance received through the Mississippi Rural
295 Physicians Scholarship Program shall be liable for the repayment
296 of all financial assistance provided to the participant through
297 the program, along with other penalties that may be prescribed by
298 the commission, an amount which shall be reduced on a pro rata
299 basis for actual years of practice by the physician in the area
300 designated by the commission.

301 **SECTION 10.** The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
302 Program, acting through the commission, shall make every effort to
303 establish an initial practice entry support system for
304 participants in the program.

305 **SECTION 11.** This act may not be construed as granting the
306 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program or its governing
307 commission any governing or administrative authority over any
308 program administered by any college, university, medical school or
309 residency program in this state or any other program established
310 by state law, including the Medical Education Scholarship and Loan
311 Repayment Program established under Section 37-143-6.

312 **SECTION 12.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
313 and after its passage.