

By: Senator(s) Tollison

To: Education;  
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2219

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

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

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

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

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

30 amount equal to the highest total cost of tuition, books,  
31 materials and fees assessed by a state institution of higher  
32 learning during that school year.

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

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

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

54 (7) As a condition for participation in the program, a  
55 teacher shall agree to continued employment as a licensed teacher  
56 in a school district located in the state, for a period of not  
57 less than three (3) years which shall follow those years of  
58 service rendered while obtaining the Master of Education degree,  
59 Educational Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree.  
60 However, for any person who obtained a baccalaureate degree in  
61 education with a financial scholarship under the Critical Needs  
62 Teacher Scholarship Program and who entered the Teacher Retention

63 Grant Program before rendering service as a teacher, the period of  
64 employment for the purposes of this subsection shall be two (2)  
65 years, in addition to the employment commitment required under the  
66 Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program. Service rendered by a  
67 participant as a licensed teacher in a school district in this  
68 state before that teacher becomes a participant in the program may  
69 not be considered to fulfill the employment commitment required  
70 under this subsection. Any person failing to comply with this  
71 employment commitment in any required school year shall  
72 immediately be in breach of contract and become liable immediately  
73 to the State Department of Education for the sum of all  
74 scholarships awarded to that person, less one-third (1/3) of the  
75 amount of that sum for each year that service was rendered, or for  
76 those persons whose required period of employment is two (2)  
77 years, less one-half (1/2) of the amount of that sum for each year  
78 that service was rendered, plus interest accruing at the current  
79 Stafford Loan rate at the time the breach occurs, except in the  
80 case of a deferral for cause by the State Board of Education when  
81 there is no employment position immediately available upon the  
82 teacher's obtaining of the Master of Education degree, Educational  
83 Specialist degree or Doctor of Education degree. After the period  
84 of such deferral, the person shall resume the required teaching  
85 duties or shall become liable to the board under this subsection.  
86 If a claim for repayment under this subsection is placed in the  
87 hands of an attorney for collection after default, then the  
88 obligor shall be liable for an additional amount equal to a  
89 reasonable attorney's fee.

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

93 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
94 and after July 1, 2007.