

By: Representatives Mims, DeBar

To: Public Health and Human Services

HOUSE BILL NO. 776

1 AN ACT TO CREATE NEW SECTIONS 37-146-1, 37-146-3, 37-146-5,
 2 37-146-7, 37-146-9, 37-146-11, 37-146-13, 37-146-17, 37-146-19 AND
 3 37-146-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ENACT THE MISSISSIPPI
 4 RURAL DENTISTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF IDENTIFYING
 5 QUALIFIED UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM RURAL AREAS OF THE
 6 STATE FOR DENTAL SCHOOL MATRICULATION; TO ESTABLISH THE
 7 MISSISSIPPI RURAL DENTISTS SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION TO PROMULGATE
 8 RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOLARSHIP
 9 PROGRAM; TO PRESCRIBE APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS AND PROVIDE A
 10 MAXIMUM NUMBER OF NEW ADMISSIONS PER YEAR; TO PROVIDE STANDARDS
 11 FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE THAT THE STUDENT IS
 12 OBLIGATED FOR ONE YEAR OF PRACTICE AS A DENTIST IN A RURAL AREA
 13 FOR EVERY YEAR OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE; TO DEFINE THE LIMITATION
 14 OF PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

16 **SECTION 1.** The following provision shall be codified as
 17 Section 37-146-1, Mississippi Code of 1972:

18 37-146-1. **Mississippi Rural Dentists Program established.**

19 There is established the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship
 20 Program for the purpose of identifying and recruiting qualified
 21 university and college students from rural areas of the state for
 22 dental school matriculation. The program shall consist of three
 23 (3) distinct phases through which participants will progress,
 24 including:



- 25 (a) Undergraduate pre-dental education;
26 (b) Dental school and residency; and
27 (c) Initial entry into dental practice in a rural or
28 underserved area of the State of Mississippi.

29 **SECTION 2.** The following provision shall be codified as
30 Section 37-146-3, Mississippi Code of 1972:

31 37-146-3. **Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Commission;**
32 **compensation; program funding.** (1) The Mississippi Rural
33 Dentists Scholarship Program shall be administered by a commission
34 to be known as the "Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship
35 Commission." The commission shall be directed by a board composed
36 of the following members:

37 (a) Two (2) dentists appointed by and from the
38 membership of the Mississippi Dental Association, the term of
39 which shall be three (3) years and who may be reappointed for one
40 (1) additional term;

41 (b) One (1) dentist appointed by and from the
42 membership of each of the following organizations, the term of
43 which shall be three (3) years and who may be reappointed for one
44 (1) additional term:

- 45 (i) Mississippi Dental Society;
46 (ii) Mississippi Academy of General Dentistry; and
47 (iii) Mississippi Chapter, American Academy of
48 Pediatric Dentistry;



49 (c) Two (2) designees of the Dean of the University of
50 Mississippi School of Dentistry whose terms are at the discretion
51 of the dean, at least one (1) of whom is a member of the
52 University of Mississippi School of Dentistry Admissions
53 Committee; and

54 (d) Two (2) dental students, one (1) of whom shall be
55 selected yearly through a process developed by the Dean of the
56 School of Dentistry in consultation with the chairs of the various
57 departments.

58 (2) The pre-professional advisors from the accredited
59 four-year colleges and universities in the State of Mississippi
60 shall comprise an advisory committee to the commission in the
61 administration of the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship
62 Program.

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

65 (4) All appointments to the commission must be made no later
66 than September 1, 2013. After the members are appointed, the
67 Program Director of the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship
68 Program shall set a date for the organizational meeting that is
69 mutually acceptable to the majority of the commission members.
70 The organizational meeting shall be for the purposes of organizing
71 the commission and establishing rules for transacting its
72 business. A majority of the members of the commission shall
73 constitute a quorum at all commission meetings. An affirmative



74 vote of a majority of the members present and voting shall be
75 required in the adoption of rules, reports and in any other
76 actions taken by the commission. At the organizational meeting,
77 the commission shall elect a chair and vice chair from the members
78 appointed according to paragraphs (a) through (d) of subsection
79 (1). The chair shall serve for a term of two (2) years, upon the
80 expiration of which, the vice chair shall assume the office of
81 chair.

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

84 (6) The commission may form an executive committee for the
85 purpose of transacting business that must be conducted before the
86 next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission. All actions
87 taken by the executive committee must be ratified by the
88 commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

89 (7) Members of the commission shall serve without
90 compensation but may be reimbursed, subject to the availability of
91 funding, for mileage and actual and necessary expenses incurred in
92 attending meetings of the commission, as provided in Section
93 25-3-41.

94 (8) Funding for the establishment and continued operation of
95 the program and commission shall be appropriated out of any money
96 in the State General Fund not already appropriated to the
97 University of Mississippi Medical Center.



98 **SECTION 3.** The following provision shall be codified as
99 Section 37-146-5, Mississippi Code of 1972:

100 37-146-5. **Powers and duties of the commission.** The
101 Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Commission shall have the
102 following powers and duties:

103 (a) Developing the administrative policy for the
104 commission and the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program;

105 (b) Promulgating rules and regulations, with the advice
106 and consent of the University of Mississippi Medical Center,
107 pertaining to the implementation and operation of the Rural
108 Dentists Scholarship Program;

109 (c) Developing and implementing strategies and
110 activities for the identification and recruitment of students and
111 for marketing the program and for the implementation of the
112 program. In developing these strategies, the board shall seek the
113 input of various organizations and entities.

114 (d) Establishing a budget, with the advice and consent
115 of the University of Mississippi Medical Center, to support the
116 activities of the program and periodically reviewing and if
117 appropriate, revising, the scholarship and other stipends offered
118 through the program;

119 (e) Advising the University of Mississippi Medical
120 Center regarding hiring appropriate staff necessary to work in
121 conjunction with the Executive Director of the Mississippi Rural
122 Physicians Scholarship Program.



123 (f) Reviewing participants' progress in the program and
124 mentoring students and dentists participating in the program;

125 (g) The commission shall have the authority through use
126 of generally applicable definitions, to designate an area of the
127 state as underserved or rural. The method by which these
128 designations shall be made shall be contained in rules and
129 regulations promulgated by the commission.

130 **SECTION 4.** The following provision shall be codified as
131 Section 37-146-7, Mississippi Code of 1972:

132 37-146-7. **Identification and recruitment of undergraduate**
133 **participants; designation of underserved or rural area; applicant**
134 **qualifications; maximum number of new admissions per year. (1)**

135 The commission shall develop and implement policies and procedures
136 designed to recruit, identify and enroll undergraduate students
137 who demonstrate necessary interest, commitment, aptitude and
138 academic achievement to pursue careers as dentists in rural or
139 dentally underserved areas of Mississippi, and to develop and
140 implement the programs designed to foster successful entry of
141 participants into dental school, completion of dental school, and
142 establishment and maintenance of a career in dentistry in a rural
143 or underserved area of Mississippi.

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



147 (3) The commission, in conjunction with the University of
148 Mississippi Medical Center, shall have the authority to provide
149 students selected for scholarship funding with faculty mentors and
150 other programs designed to enhance the students' likelihood of
151 admission to the dental school. The commission and the University
152 of Mississippi Medical Center will develop coursework that will
153 help provide scholarship students with the skills necessary for
154 sustained and successful dental practice in rural Mississippi.

155 (4) Each applicant for admission to the program must submit
156 an application to the commission that conforms to requirements
157 established by the commission.

158 (5) In selecting participants for the program, the board may
159 only accept an applicant if his or her academic record and other
160 characteristics, if given consideration by the University of
161 Mississippi School of Dentistry Admissions Committee, would be
162 considered credible and competitive.

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

165 (7) Up to three (3) students will be admitted to the
166 Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program each year.

167 **SECTION 5.** The following provision shall be codified as
168 Section 37-146-9, Mississippi Code of 1972:

169 37-146-9. **Participants to adhere to program policies and**
170 **practices to remain in program; forgiveness or repayment of**
171 **financial assistance under certain circumstances. (1)**



172 Participants must adhere to the policies and practices as
173 stipulated by the commission to continue in the program.

174 (2) Students in the program may receive tuition or other
175 financial support that may be provided by the commission. If a
176 student in the program is admitted to and completes dental school,
177 any tuition or other educational and living support provided to
178 the student by the commission will be forgiven. However, if the
179 student is not successful in being accepted into dental school
180 within three (3) years of entry into the Mississippi Rural
181 Dentists Scholarship Program, or if the student otherwise breaches
182 his or her agreement with the commission, all financial assistance
183 provided to the student must be repaid according to policies
184 adopted by the board.

185 **SECTION 6.** The following provision shall be codified as
186 Section 37-146-11, Mississippi Code of 1972:

187 37-146-11. **Participants may apply to the accredited dental**
188 **school in Mississippi; early admissions process for students**
189 **applying to University of Mississippi School of Dentistry. (1)**

190 Students in the program may apply to the Mississippi Dental
191 School.

192 (2) Students in the program seeking admission to the
193 University of Mississippi School of Dentistry shall be eligible
194 for the admissions process pursuant to criteria established by the
195 School of Dentistry Admissions Committee which will include
196 consideration of the attributes of participation in the program.



197 (3) In carrying out the admissions process developed for the
198 Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program participants under
199 this section, the goal is for the program to work with the School
200 of Dentistry to enhance the capability of participants to
201 successfully enter and complete dental school and enter practice
202 in rural or underserved areas in Mississippi. To the extent
203 feasible, the early admissions process should be completed before
204 December 1 of the year preceding a student's admission to dental
205 school.

206 **SECTION 7.** The following provision shall be codified as
207 Section 37-146-13, Mississippi Code of 1972:

208 37-146-13. **Ongoing financial support for program**
209 **participants who attend dental school; preference for ongoing**
210 **support to University of Mississippi School of Dentistry students;**
211 **students obligated for one year of practice for every year of**
212 **financial assistance received.** (1) Subject to the availability
213 of funding, students in the program who successfully matriculate
214 to dental school are eligible for ongoing financial support in
215 accordance with policies and requirements of the commission and in
216 accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. The number
217 of students to be supported at the University of Mississippi
218 School of Dentistry and at other schools will be established by
219 policy prescribed by the commission.

220 (2) Subject to the availability of funding, students
221 enrolled at the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry may



222 receive tuition support, funding to assist with the cost of books
223 and a living stipend, as prescribed by policy of the commission
224 and in accordance with applicable regulations. Preferences for
225 ongoing funding must be given to those students admitted to the
226 University of Mississippi School of Dentistry.

227 (3) For each year that a student in dental school receives
228 financial assistance, the student is obligated for one (1) year of
229 practice as a dentist in a rural or underserved area in
230 Mississippi. Breach of the agreement at any stage of training
231 shall invoke the repayment of all financial assistance provided to
232 the student through the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship
233 Program along with other penalties that may be prescribed in
234 policy by the commission.

235 **SECTION 8.** The following provision shall be codified as
236 Section 37-146-17, Mississippi Code of 1972:

237 37-146-17. **Program participants required to enter practice**
238 **of dentistry in health professional shortage, rural or underserved**
239 **area upon completion of residency for number of years**
240 **corresponding to number of years assistance received up to maximum**
241 **of five years; breach of contract; liability for repayment. (1)**

242 Upon completion of dental school and/or a dental residency program
243 approved by the commission, a participant in the Mississippi Rural
244 Dentists Scholarship Program must proceed to enter the full-time
245 practice of dentistry in a rural or underserved area in
246 Mississippi, as defined by the commission and consistent with



247 generally acceptable designations. If an area experiences
248 significant changes in its dental or general community which are
249 not reflected by dental health professional shortage area (HPSA),
250 the commission may receive testimony and, in its discretion, may
251 qualify the area as a dentally underserved or rural area to allow
252 the program participant to fulfill his or her practice obligation.

253 (2) Upon entering the practice of dentistry, a participant
254 in the program must serve in a dental health professional shortage
255 area (HPSA) or rural area otherwise approved for practice under
256 subsection (1) of this section for a number of years which
257 corresponds to the number of years, not to exceed five (5), for
258 which the participant received funding through the program. Any
259 participant who fails to complete the period of practice for which
260 he or she is obligated to provide services in a dental health
261 professional shortage area (HPSA) or rural area in exchange for
262 financial assistance received through the Mississippi Rural
263 Dentists Scholarship Program shall be liable for the repayment of
264 all financial assistance provided to the participant through the
265 program, along with other penalties that may be prescribed by the
266 commission, an amount which shall be reduced on a pro rata basis
267 for actual years of practice by the dentist in the area designated
268 by the commission.

269 **SECTION 9.** The following provision shall be codified as
270 Section 37-146-19, Mississippi Code of 1972:



271 37-146-19. **Initial practice entry support system for program**
272 **participants.** The Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program,
273 acting through the commission, shall make an effort to establish
274 an initial practice entry support system for participants in the
275 program.

276 **SECTION 10.** The following provision shall be codified as
277 Section 37-146-21, Mississippi Code of 1972:

278 37-146-21. **Limitation of program and commission governing**
279 **and administrative authority.** This chapter may not be construed
280 as granting the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program or
281 its governing commission any governing or administrative authority
282 over any program administered by any college, university, dental
283 school or residency program in this state or any other program
284 established by state law.

285 **SECTION 11.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
286 and after July 1, 2013.

