MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE

**REGULAR SESSION 2014** 

By: Senator(s) Watson

To: Education; Finance

SENATE BILL NO. 2595

1 AN ACT ENTITLED THE "MISSISSIPPI EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT TAX 2 CREDIT ACT OF 2014"; TO ESTABLISH AN EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT TAX 3 CREDIT (EITC) PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT 4 AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO LOW- AND 5 MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES SEEKING EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS FOR THEIR 6 CHILDREN; TO AUTHORIZE THE INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR BUSINESS FIRMS 7 MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS TO QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP 8 ORGANIZATION OR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND TO 9 PROVIDE STANDARDS AND LIMITATIONS FOR SUCH CONTRIBUTIONS; TO 10 PROVIDE THAT THE SCHOLARSHIPS RECEIVED BY AN ELIGIBLE STUDENT FROM 11 A SCHOLARSHIP ORGANIZATION ARE DEDUCTIBLE AS AN ADJUSTMENT TO 12 GROSS INCOME; TO AMEND SECTION 27-7-18, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, 13 IN CONFORMITY THERETO; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

15 <u>SECTION 1.</u> Short title. Sections 1 through 8 of this act 16 shall be known and may be cited as the "Mississippi Educational

17 Improvement Tax Credit Act of 2014."

18 SECTION 2. Educational improvement tax credit (EITC). (1)

19 **Definitions.** The following words and phrases when used in this

20 section shall have the meanings given to them in this section

21 unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(a) "Business firm" means an entity authorized to dobusiness in this state and subject to taxes imposed under the

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24 Mississippi Income Tax Law, Section 27-7-1 et seq. The term 25 includes a pass-through entity. For purposes of this section, a 26 business firm shall be included in one (1) of the following 27 groups:

28 (i) Group 1 includes any business firm that is 29 either entering the second year of a two-year commitment or applying for tax credits for a contribution to an educational 30 improvement organization that is also a school district 31 32 foundation, public school foundation or charter school foundation. 33 (ii) Group 2 includes any business firm other than 34 a business firm in Group 1. 35 "Contribution" means a donation of cash, personal (b) 36 property or services, the value of which is the net cost of the 37 donation to the donor or the pro rata hourly wage, including 38 benefits, of the individual performing the services. 39 (C) "Authority" means the Mississippi Development 40 Authority. "Educational improvement organization" means a 41 (d) 42 nonprofit entity which: 43 Is exempt from federal taxation under Section (i) 44 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (Public Law 99-514, 45 26 USC Section 1 et seq.); and (ii) Contributes at least eighty percent (80%) of 46 its annual receipts as grants to a public school for innovative 47 48 educational programs.

S. B. No. 2595 ~ OFFICIAL ~ 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 2 (tb\rc) For purposes of this definition, a nonprofit entity recontributes" its annual cash receipts when it expends or otherwise irrevocably encumbers those funds for expenditure during the then-current fiscal year of the nonprofit entity or during the next succeeding fiscal year of the nonprofit entity. A "nonprofit entity" includes a school district foundation, public school foundation or charter school foundation.

(e) "Eligible student" means a school-age student,
including an eligible student with a disability, who is enrolled
in a school and is a member of a household with a maximum annual
household income as increased by the applicable income allowance.

60 (f) "Eligible student with a disability" means a61 school-age student who meets all of the following:

(i) Is either enrolled in a special education
school or has otherwise been identified, in accordance with
applicable state and federal law relating to special education
services and programs as a "child with a disability," as defined
in 34 CFR Section 300.8 (relating to a child with a disability).

67 (ii) Needs special education and related services.68 (iii) Is enrolled in a school.

69 (iv) Is a member of a household with a household70 income of not more than the maximum annual household income.

(g) "Household" means an individual living alone or with the following: a spouse, parent and their unemancipated minor children, other unemancipated minor children who are related

S. B. No. 2595 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 3 (tb\rc) 74 by blood or marriage, or other adults or unemancipated minor 75 children living in the household who are dependent upon the 76 individual.

(h) "Household income" means all monies or property received of whatever nature and from whatever source derived. The term does not include the following:

80 (i) Periodic payments for sickness and disability
81 other than regular wages received during a period of sickness or
82 disability.

83 (ii) Disability, retirement or other payments
84 arising under workers' compensation acts, occupational disease
85 acts, and similar legislation by any government.

86 (iii) Payments commonly recognized as old-age or
87 retirement benefits paid to persons retired from service after
88 reaching a specific age or after a stated period of employment.

89 (iv) Payments commonly known as public assistance 90 or unemployment compensation payments by a governmental agency. 91 Payments to reimburse actual expenses. (V) 92 (vi) Payments made by employers or labor unions 93 for programs covering hospitalization, sickness, disability or 94 death, supplemental unemployment benefits, strike benefits, social 95 security and retirement.

96 (vii) Compensation received by United States97 servicemen serving in a combat zone.

98 (i) "Income allowance" means:

S. B. No. 2595 **~ OFFICIAL ~** 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 4 (tb\rc) 99 (i) Subject to subparagraph (ii) of this 100 paragraph, the amount of:

101 1. Before July 1, 2015, Ten Thousand Dollars 102 (\$10,000.00) for each eligible student and dependent member of a 103 household.

104 2. After June 30, 2016, Twelve Thousand 105 Dollars (\$12,000.00) for each eligible student and dependent 106 member of a household.

(ii) Beginning July 1, 2017, the Mississippi Development Authority shall annually adjust the income allowance amounts under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph to reflect any upward changes in the Consumer Price Index for all consumers for the Mississippi area in the preceding twelve (12) months and shall immediately submit the adjusted amounts to the Secretary of State for publication as a notice.

(j) "Innovative educational program" means an advanced academic or similar program that is not part of the regular academic program of a public school but that enhances the curriculum or academic program of the public school.

118 (k) "Maximum annual household income" means: 119 (i) Except as stated in subparagraph (ii) of this 120 paragraph and subject to subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph, the 121 following:

Before July 1, 2014, not more than Fifty
 Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00).

S. B. No. 2595 **~ OFFICIAL ~** 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 5 (tb\rc) 124 2. After June 30, 2014, not more than Sixty 125 Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00). 126 (ii) With respect to an eligible student with a 127 disability, as calculated by multiplying the sum of: 128 The applicable amount under subparagraph 1. 129 (i) of this paragraph; and 130 The applicable income allowance; by 2. 131 3. The applicable support level factor 132 according to the following table: 133 Support Level Support Level Factor 1 1.50 134 2.993 135 2 136 Beginning July 1, 2015, the Mississippi (iii) 137 Development Authority shall annually adjust the income amounts under subparagraphs (i) and (ii) of this paragraph to reflect any 138 139 upward changes in the Consumer Price Index for all consumers for 140 the Mississippi area in the preceding twelve (12) months and shall immediately submit the adjusted amounts to the Secretary of State 141 142 for publication as a notice. 143 "Pass-through entity" means a partnership or a (1)144 single-member limited liability company treated as a disregarded 145 entity for federal income tax purposes or a Mississippi S Corporation as defined in Section 27-8-1. 146

147 (m) "Scholarship" means an award under a scholarship148 program.

S. B. No. 2595 **~ OFFICIAL ~** 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 6 (tb\rc) 149 (n) "Scholarship organization" means a nonprofit entity
150 that:

(i) Is exempt from federal taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (Public Law 99-514, 26 USC Section 1 et seq.); and

(ii) Contributes at least eighty percent (80%) of its annual cash receipts to a scholarship program. For purposes of this definition, a nonprofit entity "contributes" its annual cash receipts to a scholarship program when it expends or otherwise irrevocably encumbers those funds for distribution during the then-current fiscal year of the nonprofit entity or during the next succeeding fiscal year of the nonprofit entity.

(o) "Scholarship program" means a program to provide tuition to eligible students to attend a school located in this state. A scholarship program must include an application and review process for the purpose of making awards to eligible students. The award of scholarships to eligible students shall be made without limiting availability to only students of one (1) school.

168 (p) "School" means an elementary school or secondary 169 school at which the compulsory attendance requirements of the 170 state may be met.

(q) "School age" means from the earliest admission age to a school's kindergarten program or, when no kindergarten program is provided, the school's earliest admission age for

S. B. No. 2595 **~ OFFICIAL ~** 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 7 (tb\rc) 174 students, until the end of the school year the student attains 175 twenty-one (21) years of age or graduation from high school, 176 whichever occurs first.

(r) "Special education school" means a school or program within a school that is designated specifically and exclusively for students with any of the disabilities listed in 34 CFR Section 300.8 (relating to a child with a disability) and meets one (1) of the following:

182

(i) Is licensed;

183 (ii) Is accredited by an accrediting association184 approved by the State Board of Education;

185 (iii) Is a school for the blind or deaf receiving 186 state appropriations; or

187 (iv) Is operated by or under the authority of a 188 bona fide religious institution or by the state or any political 189 subdivision thereof.

(s) "Support level" means the level of support needed by an eligible student with a disability, as stated in the following:

193 (i) Support level 1. The student is not enrolled194 in a special education school.

195 (ii) Support level 2. The student is enrolled in196 a special education school.

197 (t) "Tax credit" means the educational improvement tax198 credit established under this section.

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## 199 SECTION 3. Qualification and application. (1)

200 **Establishment.** An educational improvement tax credit program is 201 established to enhance the educational opportunities available to 202 all students in this state.

(2) Information. In order to qualify under this section, a
scholarship organization or an educational improvement
organization must submit information to the Mississippi
Development Authority that enables the authority to confirm that
the organization is exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3)
of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(3) Scholarship organizations. A scholarship organization must certify to the authority that the organization is eligible to participate in the program established under this section and must agree to annually report the following information to the authority by September 1 of each year:

(a) (i) The number of scholarships awarded during theimmediately preceding school year to eligible students.

(ii) The total and average amounts of scholarships awarded during the immediately preceding school year to eligible students.

(iii) The number of scholarships awarded during the immediately preceding school year to eligible students in Kindergarten through Grade 8.

S. B. No. 2595 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 9 (tb\rc) (iv) The total and average amounts of scholarships awarded during the immediately preceding school year to eligible students in Kindergarten through Grade 8.

(v) The number of scholarships awarded during the immediately preceding school year to eligible students in Grades 9 through 12.

(vi) The total and average amounts of scholarships awarded during the immediately preceding school year to eligible students in Grades 9 through 12.

(vii) Where the scholarship organization collects information on a county-by-county basis, the total number and the total dollar amount of scholarships awarded during the immediately preceding school year to residents of each county in which the scholarship organization awarded scholarships.

(b) The information required under paragraph (a) of this subsection shall be submitted on a form provided by the authority. No later than May 1 of each year, the authority shall annually distribute such sample forms, together with the forms on which the reports are required to be made, to each listed scholarship organization.

(c) The authority may not require any other information to be provided by scholarship organizations, except as expressly authorized in this section.

245 (4) Educational improvement organization. (a) An
246 application submitted by an educational improvement organization

S. B. No. 2595 **~ OFFICIAL ~** 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 10 (tb\rc) 247 must describe its proposed innovative educational program or 248 programs in a form prescribed by the authority. In prescribing 249 the form, the authority shall consult with the Department of 250 Education as necessary. The authority shall review and approve or 251 disapprove the application. In order to be eligible to 252 participate in the program established under this section, an 253 educational improvement organization must agree to annually report 254 the following information to the authority by September 1 of each 255 year:

(i) The name of the innovative educational program
or programs and the total amount of the grant or grants made to
those programs during the immediately preceding school year.

(ii) A description of how each grant was utilized
during the immediately preceding school year and a description of
any demonstrated or expected innovative educational improvements.

(iii) The names of the public schools and school districts where innovative educational programs that received grants during the immediately preceding school year were implemented.

(iv) Where the educational improvement organization collects information on a county-by-county basis, the total number and the total dollar amount of grants made during the immediately preceding school year for programs at public schools in each county in which the educational improvement organization made grants.

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(b) The information required under paragraph (a) of this subsection shall be submitted on a form provided by the authority. No later than May 1 of each year, the authority shall annually distribute such sample forms, together with the forms on which the reports are required to be made, to each listed educational improvement organization.

(c) The authority may not require any other information
to be provided by educational improvement organizations, except as
expressly authorized in this section.

(5) Notification. The authority shall notify the scholarship organization or educational improvement organization that the organization meets the requirements of this section for that fiscal year no later than sixty (60) days after the organization has submitted the information required under this section.

(6) Publication. The authority shall annually publish a
list of each scholarship organization or educational improvement
organization qualified under this section. The list shall also be
posted and updated as necessary on the publicly accessible
Internet website of the authority.

292 <u>SECTION 4.</u> Application. (1) Scholarship organization. In 293 order to receive a tax credit, a business firm shall apply to the 294 authority. A business firm shall receive a tax credit if the 295 scholarship organization that receives the contribution appears on 296 the list established under Section 3 of this act.

S. B. No. 2595 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 12 (tb\rc) 297 (2) Educational improvement organization. In order to
298 receive a tax credit, a business firm shall apply to the
299 authority. A business firm shall receive a tax credit if the
300 authority has approved the program provided by the educational
301 improvement organization that receives the contribution.

302 (3) Contributions. A contribution by a business firm to a
303 scholarship organization or educational improvement organization
304 shall be made no later than sixty (60) days following the approval
305 of an application under subsection (1) or (2) of this section.

306 SECTION 5. Tax credit. (1) Scholarship or educational 307 improvement organizations. In accordance with Sections 1 through 308 8 of this act, the Mississippi Department of Revenue shall grant a 309 tax credit against any income tax due to a business firm providing 310 proof of a contribution to a scholarship organization or 311 educational improvement organization in the taxable year in which 312 the contribution is made which shall not exceed seventy-five 313 percent (75%) of the total amount contributed during the taxable 314 year by the business firm. The tax credit shall not exceed Three 315 Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000.00) annually per business firm 316 for contributions made to scholarship organizations or educational 317 improvement organizations.

318 (2) Additional amount. The Mississippi Department of 319 Revenue shall grant a tax credit of up to eighty percent (80%) of 320 the total amount contributed during the taxable year if the 321 business firm provides a written commitment to provide the

322 scholarship organization or educational improvement organization 323 with the same amount of contribution for two (2) consecutive tax 324 years. The business firm must provide the written commitment 325 under this subsection to the authority at the time of application.

(3) Combination of tax credits. A business firm may receive
tax credits from the Department of Revenue in any tax year for any
combination of contributions under subsection (1) or (2) of this
section. In no case may a business firm receive tax credits in
any tax year in excess of Three Hundred Thousand Dollars
(\$300,000.00) for contributions under subsections (1) and (2) of
this section.

333 **Pass-through entity.** (a) If a pass-through entity does (4) 334 not intend to use all approved tax credits under this section, it 335 may elect in writing to transfer all or a portion of the tax credit to shareholders, members or partners in proportion to the 336 337 share of the entity's distributive income to which the 338 shareholder, member or partner is entitled for use in the taxable 339 year in which the contribution is made or in the taxable year 340 immediately following the year in which the contribution is made. 341 The election shall designate the year in which the transferred tax 342 credits are to be used and shall be made according to procedures 343 established by the Department of Revenue.

(b) A pass-through entity and a shareholder, member or
partner of a pass-through entity shall not claim the tax credit
under this section for the same contribution.

S. B. No. 2595 **~ OFFICIAL ~** 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 14 (tb\rc) 347 (C) The shareholder, member or partner may not carryforward, carryback, obtain a refund of, or sell or assign the 348 tax credit. 349

350 The shareholder, member or partner may claim the (d) 351 credit on a joint return, but the tax credit may not exceed the 352 separate income of that shareholder, member or partner.

353 Restriction on applicability of credits. No tax credits (5) 354 shall be applied against any tax withheld by an employer from an 355 employee.

356 Time of application for credits. (a) (6) The authority may 357 accept applications beginning on May 15 from business firms for 358 tax credits available during a fiscal year that is to begin on 359 July 1.

360 If, on July 1 of a fiscal year, applications for (b) 361 tax credits available during the fiscal year exceed the total 362 aggregate amount of tax credits available for the fiscal year, the 363 authority shall approve applications for tax credits on the 364 following basis, subject to the provisions of this section:

365 (i) Group 1 firms whose applications were received 366 by July 1 shall be accorded first priority in the approval of tax 367 credit applications. If tax credits applied for by Group 1 firms 368 exceed the total aggregate amount of tax credits available for the 369 program under Section 6 of this act, the authority shall approve 370 on a pro rata basis the applications of all Group 1 firms that applied by July 1, and the applications of Group 2 and Group 3 371

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firms shall be denied. Approval of a reduced tax credit under this subparagraph shall not disqualify a Group 1 firm from receiving an eighty percent (80%) tax credit under subsection (2) of this section even if the amount of tax credit approved would require the Group 1 firm to make a lower scholarship contribution in the second year of a two-year commitment.

378 (ii) If tax credits remain available after credits 379 have been awarded under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph, Group 380 2 firms whose applications were received by July 1 shall be 381 accorded priority in the approval of applications for the 382 remaining tax credits. If the sum of the tax credits approved 383 under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph and the credits applied 384 for by Group 2 firms exceeds the total aggregate amount of tax 385 credits available for the program under Section 6 of this act, the 386 authority shall approve on a pro rata basis the applications for 387 the remaining tax credits submitted by all Group 2 firms that 388 applied by July 1, and the applications of Group 3 firms shall be 389 denied.

(iii) If tax credits remain available on July 1 after credits have been awarded under subparagraphs (i) and (ii) of this paragraph, applications of Group 3 firms shall be approved, on a pro rata basis within that group if necessary. Thereafter, the authority shall approve the applications of all business firms on a daily basis. If, on any day after July 1, the cumulative sum of the tax credits approved and the tax credits

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401 SECTION 6. Limitations. (1) Amount. (a) For the fiscal 402 years 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, the total aggregate 403 amount of all tax credits approved for scholarship organizations 404 and educational improvement organizations shall not exceed 405 Ninety-two Million Dollars (\$92,000,000.00) in a fiscal year. No 406 less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the total aggregate amount 407 of all tax credits approved shall be used to provide tax credits 408 for contributions from business firms to scholarship 409 organizations. No less than twenty-five (25%) of the total 410 aggregate amount of all tax credits approved shall be used to 411 provide tax credits for contributions from business firms to 412 educational improvement organizations.

(i) From the tax credits for contributions by business firms to educational improvement organizations, twenty percent (20%) of the available amount shall initially be set aside for contributions by business firms to educational improvement organizations that are also school district foundations, public school foundations, or charter school foundations and shall be distributed in accordance with Section 5 of this act.

420 (ii) Tax credits remaining from the amount set 421 aside in subparagraph (i) of this paragraph after July 1 of each

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422 year shall be made available to business firms for contributions 423 to any educational improvement organization and shall be 424 distributed in accordance with Section 5 of this act.

(b) (i) Subject to adjustment under subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, in the fiscal year 2016-2017 and each fiscal year thereafter, the total aggregate amount of all tax credits available shall equal the total aggregate amount of all tax credits available in the prior fiscal year.

430 (ii) Beginning in the fiscal year 2016-2017, in 431 any fiscal year in which the total aggregate amount of all tax 432 credits approved for the prior fiscal year is equal to or greater 433 than ninety percent (90%) of the total aggregate amount of all tax 434 credits available for the prior fiscal year, the total aggregate 435 amount of all tax credits available shall increase by five percent (5%). The authority shall publish on its Internet website the 436 total aggregate amount of all tax credits available when the 437 438 amount is increased under this paragraph.

439 (2) Activities. No tax credit shall be approved for
440 activities that are a part of a business firm's normal course of
441 business.

442 (3) Tax liability. (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b)
443 of this subsection, a tax credit granted for any one (1) taxable
444 year may not exceed the tax liability of a business firm.

(b) In the case of a credit granted to a pass-throughentity which elects to transfer the credit according to Section 5

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447 of this act, a tax credit granted for any one (1) taxable year and 448 transferred to a shareholder, member or partner may not exceed the 449 tax liability of the shareholder, member or partner.

(4) Use. A tax credit not used by the applicant in the taxable year the contribution was made or in the year designated by the shareholder, member or partner to whom the credit was transferred may not be carried forward or carried back and is not refundable or transferable.

(5) Nontaxable income. A scholarship received by an
eligible student shall be deductible as an adjustment to gross
income under the Mississippi Income Tax Law as provided in Section
27-7-18.

459 <u>SECTION 7.</u> Lists. The Department of Revenue shall provide 460 to the Legislature, by June 30 of each year, a list of all 461 scholarship organizations and educational improvement 462 organizations that receive contributions from business firms 463 granted a tax credit.

464 <u>SECTION 8.</u> Guidelines. The Mississippi Development 465 Authority, in consultation with the Department of Education, shall 466 develop guidelines to determine the eligibility of an innovative 467 educational program.

468 **SECTION 9.** Sections 1 through 8 of this act shall be 469 codified in Chapter 7, Title 27, Mississippi Code of 1972.

470 SECTION 10. Section 27-7-18, Mississippi Code of 1972, is 471 amended as follows:

S. B. No. 2595 **~ OFFICIAL ~** 14/SS26/R184.1 PAGE 19 (tb\rc) 472 27-7-18. (1) Alimony payments. In the case of a person 473 described in Section 27-7-15(2)(e), there shall be allowed as a 474 deduction from gross income amounts paid as periodic payments to 475 the extent of such amounts as are includible in the gross income 476 of the spouse as provided in Section 27-7-15(2)(e), payment of 477 which is made within the person's taxable year.

Unreimbursed moving expenses incurred after December 31,
1994, are deductible as an adjustment to gross income in
accordance with provisions of the United States Internal Revenue
Code, and rules, regulations and revenue procedures thereunder
relating to moving expenses, not in direct conflict with the
provisions of the Mississippi Income Tax Law.

Amounts paid after December 31, 1998, by a self-employed 484 (3) 485 individual for insurance which constitute medical care for the 486 taxpayer, his spouse and dependents, are deductible as an 487 adjustment to gross income in accordance with provisions of the 488 United States Internal Revenue Code, and rules, regulations and 489 revenue procedures thereunder relating to such payments, not in 490 direct conflict with the provisions of the Mississippi Income Tax 491 Law.

(4) Contributions or payments to a Mississippi Affordable
College Savings (MACS) Program account are deductible from gross
income as provided in Section 37-155-113. Payments made under a
prepaid tuition contract entered into under the Mississippi

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496 Prepaid Affordable College Tuition Program are deductible as 497 provided in Section 37-155-17.

498 (5) Unreimbursed travel expenses, lodging expenses and (a) 499 lost wages an individual incurred as a result of, and related to, 500 the donation, while living, of one or more of his or her organs 501 for human organ transplantation, are deductible from gross income. 502 The deduction from gross income authorized by this subsection may 503 be claimed for only once and may not exceed Ten Thousand Dollars 504 (\$10,000.00).

As used in this subsection, "organ" means all or 505 (b) 506 part of a liver, pancreas, kidney, intestine, lung or bone marrow. 507 (6) Scholarships received by an eligible student from a 508 scholarship organization as defined in Section 2 of this act that 509 has qualified under Section 3 of this act are deductible as an 510 adjustment to gross income. 511 SECTION 11. This act shall take effect and be in force from

512 and after July 1, 2014.