

By: Senator(s) DeBar, Simmons (12th),  
Simmons (13th), Jackson (11th)

To: Education

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE  
FOR  
SENATE BILL NO. 2527

1 AN ACT TO REENACT SECTIONS 37-159-1, 37-159-5, 37-159-7,  
2 37-159-9, 37-159-11 AND 37-159-17, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH  
3 CREATE THE "MISSISSIPPI CRITICAL TEACHER SHORTAGE ACT OF 1998"; TO  
4 AMEND SECTION 37-159-19, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO EXTEND THE  
5 REPEALER ON THOSE SECTIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

7 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-159-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
8 reenacted as follows:

9 37-159-1. This act [Laws of 1998, Chapter 544] shall be  
10 known and may be cited as the "Mississippi Critical Teacher  
11 Shortage Act of 1998."

12 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-159-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
13 reenacted as follows:

14 37-159-5. The State Board of Education shall prescribe rules  
15 and regulations which, subject to available appropriations, allow  
16 for reimbursement to the state licensed teachers, from both in  
17 state and out of state, who enter into a contract for employment  
18 in a school district situated within a geographical area of the  
19 state where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as



20 designated by the State Board of Education, for the expense of  
21 moving when the employment necessitates the relocation of the  
22 teacher to a different geographical area than that in which the  
23 teacher resides before entering into such contract. In order to  
24 be eligible for the reimbursement, the teacher must apply to the  
25 local district and the district must obtain the prior approval  
26 from the department for reimbursement before the relocation  
27 occurs. If the reimbursement is approved, the department shall  
28 provide funds to the school district to reimburse the teacher an  
29 amount not to exceed One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00) for the  
30 documented actual expenses incurred in the course of relocating,  
31 including the expense of any professional moving company or  
32 persons employed to assist with the move, rented moving vehicles  
33 or equipment, mileage in the amount authorized for state employees  
34 under Section 25-3-41 if the teacher used his personal vehicle or  
35 vehicles for the move, meals and such other expenses associated  
36 with the relocation in accordance with the department's  
37 established rules and regulations. No teacher may be reimbursed  
38 for moving expenses under this section on more than one (1)  
39 occasion.

40 Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the  
41 actual residence to which the teacher relocates to be within the  
42 boundaries of the school district which has executed a contract  
43 for employment with the teacher or within the boundaries of the  
44 area designated by the State Board of Education as the critical



45 teacher shortage area in order for the teacher to be eligible for  
46 reimbursement for his moving expenses. However, teachers must  
47 relocate within the boundaries of the State of Mississippi.

48 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-159-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
49 reenacted as follows:

50 37-159-7. The school board of any school district situated  
51 within a geographical area of the state where there exists a  
52 critical shortage of teachers, as designated by the State Board of  
53 Education, in its discretion, may reimburse persons who interview  
54 for employment as a licensed teacher with the district for the  
55 mileage and other actual expenses incurred in the course of travel  
56 to and from the interview by such persons at the rate authorized  
57 for county and municipal employees under Section 25-3-41. Any  
58 reimbursement by a school board under this section shall be paid  
59 from nonminimum education program funds.

60 **SECTION 4.** Section 37-159-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
61 reenacted as follows:

62 37-159-9. (1) There is established the University Assisted  
63 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant Program within the State  
64 Department of Education. The purposes of the program shall be to  
65 attract additional qualified teachers to those geographical areas  
66 of the state where there exists a critical shortage of teachers  
67 and to retain the qualified teachers already serving as licensed  
68 teachers in geographical critical teacher shortage areas by making  
69 available scholarships to persons working towards a Master of



70 Education degree or an Educational Specialist degree at an  
71 institution of higher learning whose teacher education program is  
72 approved by the State Board of Education.

73 (2) Any institution of higher learning in the State of  
74 Mississippi which offers a Master of Education degree or an  
75 Educational Specialist degree may apply to the department for  
76 participation in the program. As part of the program,  
77 participating institutions shall collaborate with the Mississippi  
78 Teacher Center to identify, recruit and place teacher education  
79 graduates, from both within the state and out of state, in school  
80 districts situated within those areas of the state where there  
81 exists a critical shortage of teachers, as designated by the State  
82 Board of Education.

83 (3) The State Department of Education shall provide funds to  
84 participating institutions of higher learning for the purpose of  
85 awarding scholarships to qualified persons pursuing a Master of  
86 Education degree or an Educational Specialist degree at such  
87 institutions while rendering service to the state as a licensed  
88 teacher in a school district in a geographical area of the state  
89 where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as approved by  
90 the State Board of Education. The financial scholarship shall be  
91 applied to the total cost for tuition, books, materials and fees  
92 at the institution in which the student is enrolled, not to exceed  
93 an amount equal to the highest total cost of tuition, books,  
94 materials and fees assessed by a state institution of higher



95 learning during that school year. Teachers who relocate within  
96 Mississippi from out of state in order to participate in the  
97 program shall be classified as residents of the state for tuition  
98 purposes.

99 (4) Students awarded financial scholarships under the  
100 University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant  
101 Program may receive such awards for a maximum of four (4) school  
102 years; however, the maximum number of awards which may be made  
103 shall not exceed the length of time required to complete the  
104 number of academic hours necessary to obtain a Master of Education  
105 degree or an Educational Specialist degree. Financial  
106 scholarships under the program shall not be based upon an  
107 applicant's eligibility for financial aid.

108 (5) Persons relocating to a geographical area of the state  
109 where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as approved by  
110 the State Board of Education, to participate in the University  
111 Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant Program shall be  
112 eligible for reimbursement for their moving expenses to the  
113 critical teacher shortage area from the State Board of Education.  
114 The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and  
115 regulations necessary for the administration of the relocation  
116 expense reimbursement component of the University Assisted Teacher  
117 Recruitment and Retention Grant Program.

118 (6) Subject to the availability of funds, the State Board of  
119 Education may provide for professional development and support



120 services as may be necessary for the retention of teachers  
121 participating in the program in those geographical areas of the  
122 state where there exists a critical shortage of teachers.

123 (7) Any person participating in the program who fails to  
124 complete a program of study that will enable that person to obtain  
125 a Master of Education degree or Educational Specialist degree  
126 shall become liable immediately to the State Board of Education  
127 for the sum of all awards made to that person under the program,  
128 plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate at the  
129 time the person abrogates his participation in the program.

130 (8) As a condition for participation in the program, a  
131 teacher shall agree to employment as a licensed teacher in a  
132 school district located in a geographical area of the state where  
133 there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as designated by the  
134 State Board of Education, for a period of not less than three (3)  
135 years, which shall include those years of service rendered while  
136 obtaining the Master of Education degree or Educational Specialist  
137 degree. However, for any person who obtained a Baccalaureate  
138 degree in education with a financial scholarship under the  
139 Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program and who entered the  
140 University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant  
141 Program before rendering service as a teacher, the period of  
142 employment for the purposes of this subsection shall be two (2)  
143 years, in addition to the employment commitment required under the  
144 Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program. Service rendered by a



145 participant as a licensed teacher in a school district in a  
146 geographical critical teacher shortage area before that teacher  
147 becomes a participant in the program may not be considered to  
148 fulfill the employment commitment required under this subsection.  
149 Any person failing to comply with this employment commitment in  
150 any required school year shall immediately be in breach of  
151 contract and become liable immediately to the State Department of  
152 Education for the sum of all scholarships awarded and relocation  
153 expenses granted to that person, less one-third (1/3) of the  
154 amount of that sum for each year that service was rendered, or for  
155 those persons whose required period of employment is two (2)  
156 years, less one-half (1/2) of the amount of that sum for each year  
157 that service was rendered, plus interest accruing at the current  
158 Stafford Loan rate at the time the breach occurs, except in the  
159 case of a deferral for cause by the State Board of Education when  
160 there is no employment position immediately available upon the  
161 teacher's obtaining of the Master of Education degree or  
162 Educational Specialist degree. After the period of such deferral,  
163 the person shall begin or resume the required teaching duties or  
164 shall become liable to the board under this subsection. If a  
165 claim for repayment under this subsection is placed in the hands  
166 of an attorney for collection after default, then the obligor  
167 shall be liable for an additional amount equal to a reasonable  
168 attorney's fee.



169 (9) All funds received by the State Department of Education  
170 from the repayment of scholarship awards and relocation expenses  
171 by program participants shall be deposited in the Mississippi  
172 Critical Teacher Shortage Fund.

173 (10) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and  
174 regulations necessary for the proper administration of the  
175 University Assisted Teacher Recruitment and Retention Grant  
176 Program.

177 **SECTION 5.** Section 37-159-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
178 reenacted as follows:

179 37-159-11. (1) There is established the Mississippi  
180 Employer-Assisted Housing Teacher Program, which shall be a  
181 special home loan program for eligible licensed teachers who  
182 render service to the state in a geographical area of the state  
183 where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as designated  
184 by the State Board of Education. The home loan program shall be  
185 administered by the State Department of Education. The department  
186 may contract with one or more public or private entities to  
187 provide assistance in implementing and administering the program.  
188 The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations  
189 regarding the implementation and administration of the program.

190 (2) Participation in the loan program shall be available to  
191 any licensed teacher who renders service in a geographical area of  
192 the state where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as  
193 designated by the State Board of Education. Any person who





194 receives a loan under the program shall be required to purchase a  
195 house and reside in a county in which the school district for  
196 which the teacher is rendering service, or any portion of the  
197 school district, is located. The maximum amount of a loan that  
198 may be made under the program to any person shall be Six Thousand  
199 Dollars (\$6,000.00).

200 (3) Any loan made under the program to a person who actually  
201 renders service as a teacher in a geographical area of the state  
202 where there exists a critical shortage of teachers, as designated  
203 by the State Board of Education, shall be converted to an  
204 interest-free grant on the basis of one (1) year's service for  
205 one-third (1/3) of the amount of the loan. Any person who does  
206 not render three (3) years' service as a teacher in a geographical  
207 area of the state where there exists a critical shortage of  
208 teachers, as designated by the State Board of Education, shall be  
209 liable to the State Department of Education for one-third (1/3) of  
210 the amount of the loan for each year that he does not render such  
211 service, plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate  
212 at the time the person discontinues his service. If a claim for  
213 repayment under this subsection is placed in the hands of an  
214 attorney for collection, the obligor shall be liable for an  
215 additional amount equal to a reasonable attorney's fee.

216 (4) All funds received by the State Department of Education  
217 as repayment of loans by program participants shall be deposited  
218 in the Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Fund.



219           **SECTION 6.** Section 37-159-17, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
220 reenacted as follows:

221           37-159-17. There is established in the State Treasury a  
222 special fund to be designated the "Mississippi Critical Teacher  
223 Shortage Fund," into which shall be deposited those funds  
224 appropriated by the Legislature, and any other funds that may be  
225 made available, for the purpose of implementing the programs  
226 established under Sections 37-159-5, 37-9-77, 37-3-91 and 37-159-9  
227 through 37-159-13. Money in the fund at the end of a fiscal year  
228 shall not lapse into the General Fund, and interest earned on any  
229 amounts deposited into the fund shall be credited to the special  
230 fund.

231           **SECTION 7.** Section 37-159-19, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
232 amended as follows:

233           37-159-19. \* \* \* Section 37-159-13 shall stand repealed on  
234 July 1, 2021.

235           Sections 37-159-1, 37-159-5, 37-159-7, 37-159-9, 37-159-11  
236 and 37-159-17 shall stand repealed on July 1, 2024.

237           **SECTION 8.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
238 and after July 1, 2021.

