

By: Representative Scott

To: Education;  
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 305

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE ASSISTANT TEACHER SALARY WAIVER GRANT  
2 PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF HELPING ELIGIBLE ASSISTANT TEACHERS TO  
3 BECOME LICENSED TEACHERS THROUGH THE AWARDING OF GRANTS TO ATTRACT  
4 AND RETAIN QUALIFIED TEACHERS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION; TO  
5 REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO IMPLEMENT AND ADMINISTER  
6 THE GRANT PROGRAM; TO AUTHORIZE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ENTER INTO  
7 AGREEMENTS WITH QUALIFIED ASSISTANT TEACHERS TO WAIVE THAT PORTION  
8 OF THEIR SALARY EQUAL TO THE AMOUNT ESTABLISHED AS THE STATUTORY  
9 MINIMUM SALARY IN LIEU OF A GRANT FOR TUITION AT A POSTSECONDARY  
10 INSTITUTION FOR THE COMPLETION OF A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE FOR  
11 PURPOSES OF BECOMING A LICENSED TEACHER; TO PRESCRIBE THE CRITERIA  
12 TO BE USED IN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE  
13 PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO MAKE AN ANNUAL  
14 REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE BY DECEMBER 31 OF EACH YEAR ON THE  
15 NUMBER OF VACANT TEACHER POSITIONS THAT ARE AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT  
16 THE STATE AND THE NUMBER OF TEACHER POSITIONS FILLED BY  
17 INDIVIDUALS WHO HOLD A PROVISIONAL OR EMERGENCY LICENSE; TO IMPOSE  
18 FINANCIAL LIABILITY UPON ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO FAILS TO FULFILL HIS  
19 OR HER TEACHING OBLIGATION UNDER THE GRANT PROGRAM UPON COMPLETING  
20 A BACCALAUREATE DEGREE; TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-7, MISSISSIPPI CODE  
21 OF 1972, IN CONFORMITY TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND FOR  
22 RELATED PURPOSES.

23 WHEREAS, for all students to learn well in an academically  
24 competitive global society, they must have highly skilled,  
25 committed and professionally supported teachers in every core  
26 content area of the state's adopted curriculum standards; and

27 WHEREAS, nationally there are simply not enough such teachers  
28 entering the profession or committing to long-term careers in the



29 profession, and a variety of actions from many individuals and  
30 organizations are needed to recruit, prepare and retain a  
31 sufficient number of licensed teachers; and

32 WHEREAS, it is the intent of this Legislature to reinforce  
33 the commitment that the State of Mississippi has always had to its  
34 public educational system, the children and families served, and  
35 to the educational professionals who provide daily instruction to  
36 ensure that our state's most valuable resource is equipped to  
37 compete and succeed on the global academic stage, by further  
38 investing in the training and preparation of educators and  
39 prospective educators in order to place quality teachers in every  
40 classroom; and

41 WHEREAS, teacher quality includes, but is not limited to,  
42 appropriate subject matter content knowledge; deep interest in  
43 core subject content areas; a commitment to lifelong professional  
44 improvement; the desire and skill to help students learn and apply  
45 subject content-specific knowledge; and the ability to use the  
46 resources necessary to teach effectively; and

47 WHEREAS, the welfare of all our children calls for policies  
48 to attract new teachers into the profession in a way that benefits  
49 all students, as the shortage of teachers hurts all of our schools  
50 by increasing job stress on teachers and administrators alike,  
51 which in turn leads to increased turnover of staff, undermines  
52 curriculum quality and hinders efforts at staff development; and



53           WHEREAS, moreover, the shortage of qualified teachers hurts  
54 our children by forcing too many students into too few classrooms,  
55 reducing the amount of time that teachers can spend helping  
56 individual students, and spans the breadth of education,  
57 threatening to deprive the children of all races and social  
58 classes, in rural, urban and suburban communities, of the quality  
59 education needed to meet the challenges of the future; and

60           WHEREAS, in view of this pending crisis, the Mississippi  
61 Legislature believes that addressing the growing shortage of  
62 quality teachers must become one of our state's highest public  
63 policy priorities, and we call on all legislators to come together  
64 in a bipartisan effort to craft policies that promote more  
65 vigorously the recruitment, retention and development of quality  
66 teachers for all our children; NOW, THEREFORE,

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

68           **SECTION 1.** (1) There is established the Assistant Teacher  
69 Salary Waiver Grant Program for the purpose of helping eligible  
70 assistant teachers to become licensed teachers through the  
71 awarding of grants to attract and retain qualified teachers in the  
72 teaching profession. The grant program must be implemented and  
73 administered by the State Board of Education.

74           (2) Under the Assistant Teacher Salary Waiver Grant Program,  
75 qualified assistant teachers may be awarded financial assistance  
76 in an amount equal to the minimum annual salary established for  
77 assistant teachers under Section 37-21-7. However, an assistant



78 teacher may not receive a salary waiver grant through the program  
79 for more than two (2) academic years. An assistant teacher grant  
80 may not be based upon an applicant's financial need, and the  
81 receipt of any other grant or financial assistance may not affect  
82 an assistant teacher's eligibility under the program.

83 (3) In order to qualify for an assistant teacher grant, an  
84 applicant must satisfy the following requirements:

85 (a) The applicant must be employed full-time as an  
86 assistant teacher with a local school district, with a minimum of  
87 five (5) years of classroom experience;

88 (b) The applicant must be enrolled as a full-time  
89 student at a baccalaureate degree-granting institution of higher  
90 learning in the State of Mississippi that is regionally accredited  
91 and approved by the board with two (2) years or less remaining  
92 until he or she completes all courses for graduation;

93 (c) The applicant must maintain a minimum cumulative  
94 grade point average of 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale for the  
95 duration of his or her academic tenure;

96 (d) The applicant must achieve a qualifying score on  
97 the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Education examination as  
98 established by the State Board of Education upon completion of his  
99 or her first academic year of course instruction;

100 (e) The applicant must sign a salary waiver statement  
101 that expresses that the assistant teacher will waive the  
102 statutorily authorized portion of his or her salary authorized



103 under Section 37-21-7 for purposes of receiving a grant to be paid  
104 towards tuition and any books and other instructional material  
105 required by the institution of higher learning of enrollment and  
106 directly related to pre-major coursework; and

107 (f) The applicant must have expressed in writing a  
108 present intention to teach in the state for each year he or she  
109 receives a grant.

110 (4) At the beginning of the school year next succeeding the  
111 date on which a person who has received an assistant teacher grant  
112 obtains a baccalaureate degree, that person must begin to render  
113 service as a licensed teacher in the school district of employment  
114 at the time the person entered the grant program or in a school  
115 district designated by the State Board of Education. The State  
116 Board of Education shall report to the Legislature, by December 31  
117 of each year, the number of vacant teacher positions that are  
118 available throughout the state and the number of teacher positions  
119 filled by individuals who hold a provisional or emergency license.  
120 An assistant teacher who receives a grant under this section and  
121 fails to fulfill his or her required teaching obligations is  
122 liable to the school district of employment for which the salary  
123 waiver agreement was entered for the sum of all grants made to  
124 that person plus a penalty of five percent (5%) of the loan awards  
125 and interest on the combined amount accruing at the current  
126 unsubsidized Federal Stafford loan rate at the time the person  
127 abrogates.



128           **SECTION 2.** Section 37-21-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
129 amended as follows:

130           37-21-7. (1) This section shall be referred to as the  
131 "Mississippi Elementary Schools Assistant Teacher Program," the  
132 purpose of which shall be to provide an early childhood education  
133 program that assists in the instruction of basic skills. The  
134 State Board of Education is authorized, empowered and directed to  
135 implement a statewide system of assistant teachers in kindergarten  
136 classes and in the first, second and third grades. The assistant  
137 teacher shall assist pupils in actual instruction under the strict  
138 supervision of a licensed teacher.

139           (2) (a) Except as otherwise authorized under subsection  
140 (7), each school district shall employ the total number of  
141 assistant teachers funded under subsection (6) of this section.  
142 The superintendent of each district shall assign the assistant  
143 teachers to the kindergarten, first-, second- and third-grade  
144 classes in the district in a manner that will promote the maximum  
145 efficiency, as determined by the superintendent, in the  
146 instruction of skills such as verbal and linguistic skills,  
147 logical and mathematical skills, and social skills.

148           (b) If a licensed teacher to whom an assistant teacher  
149 has been assigned is required to be absent from the classroom, the  
150 assistant teacher may assume responsibility for the classroom in  
151 lieu of a substitute teacher. However, no assistant teacher shall  
152 assume sole responsibility of the classroom for more than three



153 (3) consecutive school days. Further, in no event shall any  
154 assistant teacher be assigned to serve as a substitute teacher for  
155 any teacher other than the licensed teacher to whom that assistant  
156 teacher has been assigned.

157 (3) Assistant teachers shall have, at a minimum, a high  
158 school diploma or a High School Equivalency Diploma equivalent,  
159 and shall show demonstratable proficiency in reading and writing  
160 skills. The State Department of Education shall develop a testing  
161 procedure for assistant teacher applicants to be used in all  
162 school districts in the state.

163 (4) (a) In order to receive funding, each school district  
164 shall:

165 (i) Submit a plan on the implementation of a  
166 reading improvement program to the State Department of Education;  
167 and

168 (ii) Develop a plan of educational accountability  
169 and assessment of performance, including pretests and posttests,  
170 for reading in Grades 1 through 6.

171 (b) Additionally, each school district shall:

172 (i) Provide annually a mandatory preservice  
173 orientation session, using an existing in-school service day, for  
174 administrators and teachers on the effective use of assistant  
175 teachers as part of a team in the classroom setting and on the  
176 role of assistant teachers, with emphasis on program goals;



177 (ii) Hold periodic workshops for administrators  
178 and teachers on the effective use and supervision of assistant  
179 teachers;

180 (iii) Provide training annually on specific  
181 instructional skills for assistant teachers;

182 (iv) Annually evaluate their program in accordance  
183 with their educational accountability and assessment of  
184 performance plan; and

185 (v) Designate the necessary personnel to supervise  
186 and report on their program.

187 (5) The State Department of Education shall:

188 (a) Develop and assist in the implementation of a  
189 statewide uniform training module, subject to the availability of  
190 funds specifically appropriated therefor by the Legislature, which  
191 shall be used in all school districts for training administrators,  
192 teachers and assistant teachers. The module shall provide for the  
193 consolidated training of each assistant teacher and teacher to  
194 whom the assistant teacher is assigned, working together as a  
195 team, and shall require further periodic training for  
196 administrators, teachers and assistant teachers regarding the role  
197 of assistant teachers;

198 (b) Annually evaluate the program on the district and  
199 state level. Subject to the availability of funds specifically  
200 appropriated therefor by the Legislature, the department shall  
201 develop: (i) uniform evaluation reports, to be performed by the





202 principal or assistant principal, to collect data for the annual  
203 overall program evaluation conducted by the department; or (ii) a  
204 program evaluation model that, at a minimum, addresses process  
205 evaluation; and

206 (c) Promulgate rules, regulations and such other  
207 standards deemed necessary to effectuate the purposes of this  
208 section. Noncompliance with the provisions of this section and  
209 any rules, regulations or standards adopted by the department may  
210 result in a violation of compulsory accreditation standards as  
211 established by the State Board of Education and the Commission on  
212 School Accreditation.

213 (6) (a) In addition to other funds allotted under the  
214 \* \* \* Adequate Education Program, each school district shall be  
215 allotted sufficient funding for the purpose of employing assistant  
216 teachers. No assistant teacher shall be paid less than the amount  
217 he or she received in the prior school year. No school district  
218 shall receive any funds under this section for any school year  
219 during which the aggregate amount of the local contribution to the  
220 salaries of assistant teachers by the district shall have been  
221 reduced below such amount for the previous year.

222 For assistant teachers, the minimum annual salary shall be as  
223 follows:

224 2021-2022 and School Years Thereafter Minimum Salary  
225 .....\$15,000.00

226 \* \* \*



227           (b) As an alternative to compensating an assistant  
228 teacher the minimum salary prescribed under paragraph (a) of this  
229 subsection, a school district may enter into agreement with an  
230 eligible assistant teacher for the payment of an Assistant Teacher  
231 Salary Waiver Grant for educational purposes as authorized under  
232 Section 1 of House Bill No. 305, 2022 Regular Session.

233           (c) The assistant teachers shall not be restricted to  
234 working only in the grades for which the funds were allotted, but  
235 may be assigned to other classes as provided in subsection (2) (a)  
236 of this section.

237           (7) (a) As an alternative to employing assistant teachers,  
238 any school district may use the allotment provided under  
239 subsection (6) of this section for the purpose of employing  
240 licensed teachers for kindergarten, first-, second- and  
241 third-grade classes; however, no school district shall be  
242 authorized to use the allotment for assistant teachers for the  
243 purpose of employing licensed teachers unless the district has  
244 established that the employment of licensed teachers using such  
245 funds will reduce the teacher:student ratio in the kindergarten,  
246 first-, second- and third-grade classes. All state funds for  
247 assistant teachers shall be applied to reducing teacher:student  
248 ratio in Grades K-3.

249           It is the intent of the Legislature that no school district  
250 shall dismiss any assistant teacher for the purpose of using the  
251 assistant teacher allotment to employ licensed teachers. School



252 districts may rely only upon normal attrition to reduce the number  
253 of assistant teachers employed in that district.

254 (b) Districts meeting the highest levels of  
255 accreditation standards, as defined by the State Board of  
256 Education, shall be exempted from the provisions of subsection (4)  
257 of this section.

258 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
259 and after July 1, 2022.

