

By: Representatives Mims, Stamps

To: Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 768
(As Passed the House)

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-144-1, 37-144-3, 37-144-5,
2 37-144-7, 37-144-9, 37-144-11, 37-144-13, 37-144-15, 37-144-17,
3 37-144-19 AND 37-144-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO EXPAND THE
4 MISSISSIPPI RURAL PHYSICIANS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM TO INCLUDE A LOAN
5 REPAYMENT PROGRAM FOR GRADUATES OF MEDICAL OR OSTEOPATHIC SCHOOL
6 WHO WISH TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR REPAYMENT OF THEIR
7 STATE AND FEDERAL MEDICAL EDUCATION LOANS BY PRACTICING MEDICINE
8 IN RURAL OR MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AREAS OF MISSISSIPPI; TO PROVIDE
9 THAT A PARTICIPANT IN THE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM IS ELIGIBLE TO
10 RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR REPAYMENT OF THE PARTICIPANT'S
11 STATE OR FEDERAL MEDICAL EDUCATION LOANS IN THE AMOUNT OF NOT MORE
12 THAN \$30,000.00 FOR EACH YEAR THAT THE PARTICIPANT PRACTICES
13 MEDICINE IN A RURAL OR MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AREA OF MISSISSIPPI,
14 UP TO A MAXIMUM OF \$120,000.00 PER PARTICIPANT; TO PROVIDE THAT
15 ANY PARTICIPANT WHO RECEIVES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE LOAN
16 REPAYMENT PROGRAM WHO FAILS TO COMPLETE THE PERIOD OF PRACTICE IN
17 A RURAL OR MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AREA OF MISSISSIPPI FOR WHICH THE
18 PARTICIPANT HAS OBLIGATED HIMSELF OR HERSELF SHALL BE LIABLE FOR
19 THE REPAYMENT OF ALL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE
20 PARTICIPANT THROUGH THE PROGRAM, ALONG WITH OTHER PENALTIES THAT
21 MAY BE PRESCRIBED; TO PROVIDE THAT THE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM
22 SHALL BE FUNDED BY APPROPRIATION OF THE LEGISLATURE ONLY FROM THE
23 CORONAVIRUS STATE FISCAL RECOVERY FUND; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

25 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-144-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
26 amended as follows:

27 37-144-1. (1) There is established the Mississippi Rural
28 Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program for the purpose



29 of (a) identifying and recruiting qualified university and college
30 students from rural areas of the state for medical or osteopathic
31 school matriculation; and (b) identifying and recruiting qualified
32 graduates of medical or osteopathic school who wish to receive
33 financial assistance for repayment of their state and federal
34 medical education loans by practicing medicine in rural or
35 medically underserved areas of Mississippi.

36 (2) (a) The scholarship program shall consist of three (3)
37 distinct phases through which participants will progress,
38 including:

39 (* * *i) Undergraduate premedical education;

40 (* * *ii) Medical or osteopathic school and
41 residency; and

42 (* * *iii) Post-residency entry into medical
43 practice in a rural or underserved area of the State of
44 Mississippi.

45 (b) The loan repayment program shall consist of the
46 participant practicing medicine in a rural or medically
47 underserved area of the State of Mississippi.

48 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-144-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
49 amended as follows:

50 37-144-3. (1) The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
51 and Loan Repayment Program shall be administered by a commission
52 to be known as the "Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and



53 Loan Repayment Commission." The commission shall be directed by a
54 board composed of the following members:

55 (a) Two (2) generalist physicians appointed by and from
56 the membership of the Mississippi State Medical Association, the
57 term of which shall be three (3) years and may be reappointed for
58 one (1) additional term;

59 (b) One (1) generalist physician appointed by and from
60 the membership of each of the following organizations, the term of
61 which shall be three (3) years and may be reappointed for one (1)
62 additional term:

63 (i) Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians;

64 (ii) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
65 Physicians;

66 (iii) Mississippi Chapter, American Academy of
67 Pediatrics;

68 (iv) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
69 OB-GYN;

70 (v) Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association;

71 (vi) Mississippi Osteopathic Association;

72 (c) Two (2) designees of the Dean of the University of
73 Mississippi School of Medicine whose terms are at the discretion
74 of the dean, at least one (1) of whom is a member of the
75 University of Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee;

76 (d) Two (2) medical students, one (1) of whom shall be
77 selected yearly through a process developed by the Dean of the



78 School of Medicine in consultation with the Chairs of the
79 Departments of Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, OB-GYN and
80 Pediatrics, and one (1) of whom shall be nominated for a one-year
81 term by the Mississippi Chapter of the Student National Medical
82 Association and approved by the Dean of the University of
83 Mississippi School of Medicine;

84 (e) A member of the Board of Trustees of State
85 Institutions of Higher Learning;

86 (f) The Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at
87 the University of Mississippi School of Medicine; and

88 (g) A licensed psychiatrist appointed by the
89 Mississippi Chapter of the American Psychiatric Association.

90 (2) The premedical advisors from the accredited four-year
91 colleges and universities in the state and the directors or
92 designees of the primary care generalist training programs in the
93 State of Mississippi shall comprise an advisory committee to the
94 commission to assist the commission in its administration of the
95 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment
96 Program.

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

99 (4) All appointments to the commission must be made no later
100 than September 1, 2019. After the members are appointed, the
101 Chair of the Department of Family Medicine shall set a date for
102 the organizational meeting that is mutually acceptable to the



103 majority of the commission members. The organizational meeting
104 shall be for the purposes of organizing the commission and
105 establishing rules for transacting its business. A majority of
106 the members of the commission shall constitute a quorum at all
107 commission meetings. An affirmative vote of a majority of the
108 members present and voting shall be required in the adoption of
109 rules, reports and in any other actions taken by the commission.
110 At the organizational meeting, the commission shall elect a chair
111 and vice chair from the members appointed according to paragraphs
112 (a) through (d) of subsection (1). The chair shall serve for a
113 term of two (2) years, upon the expiration of which the vice chair
114 shall assume the office of chair.

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

117 (6) The commission may form an executive committee for the
118 purpose of transacting business that must be conducted before the
119 next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission. All actions
120 taken by the executive committee must be ratified by the
121 commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

122 (7) Members of the commission shall serve without
123 compensation but may be reimbursed, subject to the availability of
124 funding, for mileage and actual and necessary expenses incurred in
125 attending meetings of the commission.

126 (8) Funding for the establishment and continued operation of
127 the program and commission shall be appropriated out of any money



128 in the General Fund not already appropriated to the University of
129 Mississippi Medical Center.

130 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-144-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
131 amended as follows:

132 37-144-5. The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and
133 Loan Repayment Commission shall have the following powers and
134 duties:

135 (a) Developing the administrative policy for the
136 commission and the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and
137 Loan Repayment Program;

138 (b) Promulgating rules and regulations, with the advice
139 and consent of the University of Mississippi Medical Center,
140 pertaining to the implementation and operation of the Rural
141 Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program;

142 (c) Developing and implementing strategies and
143 activities for the identification and recruitment of students and
144 graduates of medical and osteopathic schools and for marketing the
145 program and for the implementation of the program. In developing
146 these strategies, the board shall seek the input of various
147 organizations and entities, including the Mississippi State
148 Medical Association, the Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians,
149 the Mississippi Chapters of the American College of Physicians,
150 the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of
151 OB-GYN, the Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association, the



152 Mississippi Osteopathic Medicine Association and the American
153 Psychiatric Association;

154 (d) Establishing a budget, with the advice and consent
155 of the University of Mississippi Medical Center, to support the
156 activities of the program and periodically reviewing and if
157 appropriate, revising, the scholarship and other stipends offered
158 through the program;

159 (e) Advising the University of Mississippi Medical
160 Center regarding hiring an executive director and support staff
161 necessary for the commission's work. The commission shall
162 nominate at least two (2) individuals to serve as executive
163 director;

164 (f) Reviewing participants progress in the program and
165 mentoring students and physicians participating in the program;

166 (g) Developing and participating in programs that
167 provide initial practice support in collaboration with other
168 interested professional organizations;

169 (h) The commission shall have the authority through use
170 of generally applicable definitions, to designate an area of the
171 state as underserved or rural. The method by which these
172 designations shall be made shall be contained in rules and
173 regulations promulgated by the commission.

174 **SECTION 4.** Section 37-144-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
175 amended as follows:



176 37-144-7. (1) (a) The commission shall develop and
177 implement policies and procedures designed to recruit, identify
178 and enroll undergraduate students who demonstrate necessary
179 interest, commitment, aptitude and academic achievement to pursue
180 careers as family physicians or other generalist physicians in
181 rural or medically underserved areas of Mississippi, and to
182 develop and implement the programs designed to foster successful
183 entry of participants into medical school, completion of medical
184 school, enrollment into and completion of family medicine or other
185 generalist residency, and establishment and maintenance of a
186 career in family medicine or other generalist specialty in a rural
187 or underserved area of Mississippi.

188 (b) The commission shall develop and implement policies
189 and procedures designed to identify and recruit qualified
190 graduates of medical or osteopathic school who wish to receive
191 financial assistance for repayment of their state and federal
192 medical education loans by practicing medicine in rural or
193 medically underserved areas of Mississippi.

194 (2) The commission shall have the authority through use of
195 generally applicable definitions to designate an area of the state
196 as underserved or rural.

197 (3) The commission, in conjunction with the University of
198 Mississippi Medical Center, shall have the authority to provide
199 students selected for scholarship funding with faculty mentors and
200 other programs designed to enhance the students' likelihood of



201 admission to the medical school. The commission and the
202 University of Mississippi Medical Center will develop coursework
203 that will provide scholarship students with the skills necessary
204 for sustained and successful medical practice in rural
205 Mississippi.

206 (4) Each applicant for admission to the program must submit
207 an application to the commission that conforms to requirements
208 established by the commission.

209 (5) In selecting participants for the scholarship program,
210 the board may only accept an applicant if his or her academic
211 record and other characteristics, if given consideration by the
212 University of Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee,
213 would be considered credible and competitive.

214 (6) An applicant for the scholarship program or loan
215 repayment program may be admitted only upon a majority vote of the
216 members of the commission.

217 (7) Not less than fifteen (15) students will be admitted to
218 the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment
219 Program each year, provided that there are fifteen (15) or more
220 qualified applicants for the program.

221 (8) Upon the funding of sixty-one (61) or more rural
222 physicians scholarships by the Legislature and recognizing the
223 importance of balancing the needs of comprehensive primary care
224 along with a critical shortage of psychiatrists in Mississippi,
225 the commission may grant an exception for fourth-year medical or



226 osteopathic school (M4) students who demonstrate a desire to
227 practice psychiatry in rural Mississippi and who use a practice
228 model and enter the practice of medicine in a rural or underserved
229 area in Mississippi, as defined by the commission, beginning for
230 the M4 Class of 2020.

231 **SECTION 5.** Section 37-144-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
232 amended as follows:

233 37-144-9. (1) Participants must adhere to the policies and
234 practices as stipulated by the commission to continue in the
235 program.

236 (2) Students in the scholarship program may receive tuition
237 or other financial support that may be provided by the commission.
238 If a student in the scholarship program is admitted to and
239 completes medical or osteopathic school, any tuition or other
240 educational and living support provided to the student by the
241 commission will be forgiven. However, if the student is not
242 successful in being accepted into medical or osteopathic school
243 within three (3) years of entry into the * * * scholarship
244 program, or if the student otherwise breaches his or her agreement
245 with the commission, all financial assistance provided to the
246 student must be repaid according to policies adopted by the board.

247 **SECTION 6.** Section 37-144-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
248 amended as follows:

249 37-144-11. (1) Students in the scholarship program may
250 apply to any medical or osteopathic school that is accredited by



251 the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or the American
252 Osteopathic Association (AOA).

253 (2) Students in the scholarship program seeking admission to
254 the University of Mississippi School of Medicine shall be eligible
255 for a special admissions process pursuant to criteria established
256 by the School of Medicine Admissions Committee which will include
257 special consideration of the attributes of participation in the
258 program.

259 (3) In carrying out the admissions process developed for
260 the * * * scholarship program participants under this section, the
261 goal is for the program to work with the School of Medicine to
262 enhance the capability of participants to successfully enter and
263 complete medical school, train in family medicine or other
264 generalist primary care specialty and enter practice in rural or
265 underserved areas in Mississippi. To the extent feasible, the
266 early admissions process should be completed before November 1 of
267 the year preceding a student's admission to medical school.

268 **SECTION 7.** Section 37-144-13, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
269 amended as follows:

270 37-144-13. (1) Subject to the availability of funding,
271 students in the scholarship program who successfully matriculate
272 to medical or osteopathic school are eligible for ongoing
273 financial support in accordance with policies and requirements of
274 the commission and in accordance with the applicable laws and
275 regulations. The number of students to be supported at the



276 University of Mississippi School of Medicine and at other schools
277 will be established by policy prescribed by the commission.

278 (2) Subject to the availability of funding, students
279 enrolled at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine may
280 receive tuition support, funding to assist with the cost of books
281 and a living stipend, as prescribed by policy of the commission
282 and in accordance with applicable regulations. Preferences for
283 ongoing funding must be given to those students admitted to the
284 University of Mississippi School of Medicine.

285 (3) For each year that a student in medical or osteopathic
286 school receives financial assistance, the student is obligated for
287 one (1) year of practice as a primary care physician in a rural or
288 underserved area in Mississippi. Breach of the agreement at any
289 stage of training shall invoke the repayment of all financial
290 assistance provided to the student through the Mississippi Rural
291 Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program, including
292 assistance provided during undergraduate school, as well as in
293 medical or osteopathic school, along with other penalties that may
294 be prescribed in policy by the commission.

295 **SECTION 8.** Section 37-144-15, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
296 amended as follows:

297 37-144-15. Medical and osteopathic students in the
298 scholarship program must enter family medicine or other generalist
299 residency programs according to their choice of specialty.

300 Depending upon the availability of funds, students who



301 successfully enter residency programs which have been approved by
302 the commission may receive further financial support from the
303 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment
304 Program subject to applicable rules and policies of the
305 commission. All funding for financial support from the commission
306 to participants during their residency must be disbursed in
307 accordance with applicable regulations.

308 **SECTION 9.** Section 37-144-17, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
309 amended as follows:

310 37-144-17. (1) Upon completion of residency, a participant
311 in the * * * scholarship program must proceed to enter the
312 practice of medicine in a rural or medically underserved area in
313 Mississippi, as defined by the commission and consistent with
314 generally acceptable designations. If an area experiences
315 significant changes in its medical or general community which are
316 not reflected by health professional shortage area (HPSA) or
317 medically underserved area (MUA) rural designation, the commission
318 may receive testimony and, in its discretion, may qualify the area
319 as an underserved or rural area to allow the program participant
320 to fulfill his or her practice obligation.

321 (2) Upon entering the practice of medicine, a participant in
322 the scholarship program must serve in a health professional
323 shortage area (HPSA), medically underserved area (MUA), or rural
324 area otherwise approved for practice under subsection (1) of this
325 section for a number of years which corresponds to the number of



326 years, not to exceed five (5), for which the participant received
327 funding through the program. A participant in the scholarship
328 program who completes residency outside the State of Mississippi
329 who fails to enter the practice of medicine as required under this
330 section shall be deemed in breach of contract and shall be liable
331 for the immediate repayment of all financial assistance provided
332 to the participant through the Mississippi Rural Physicians
333 Scholarship and Loan Repayment Program, including assistance
334 provided during undergraduate school, as well as in medical or
335 osteopathic school, along with other penalties that may be
336 prescribed in policy by the board. Any participant in the
337 scholarship program who fails to complete the period of practice
338 for which he or she is obligated to provide services in a health
339 professional shortage area (HPSA) or a medically underserved area
340 (MUA) in exchange for financial assistance received through the
341 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment
342 Program shall be liable for the repayment of all financial
343 assistance provided to the participant through the program, along
344 with other penalties that may be prescribed by the commission, an
345 amount which shall be reduced on a pro rata basis for actual years
346 of practice by the physician in the area designated by the
347 commission.

348 (3) A participant in the loan repayment program is eligible
349 to receive financial assistance from the commission for repayment
350 of the participant's state or federal medical education loans in



351 the amount of not more than Thirty Thousand Dollars (\$30,000.00)
352 for each year that the participant practices medicine in a rural
353 or medically underserved area of Mississippi as described in
354 subsections (1) and (2) of this section, up to a maximum of One
355 Hundred Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$120,000.00) per participant.
356 Any participant who receives financial assistance through the loan
357 repayment program who fails to complete the period of practice in
358 a rural or medically underserved area of Mississippi for which the
359 participant has obligated himself or herself by contract with the
360 commission shall be liable for the repayment of all financial
361 assistance provided to the participant through the program, along
362 with other penalties that may be prescribed by the commission, an
363 amount which shall be reduced on a pro rata basis for actual years
364 of practice by the physician in the area designated by the
365 commission. The loan repayment program shall be funded by
366 appropriation of the Legislature only from the Coronavirus State
367 Fiscal Recovery Fund.

368 **SECTION 10.** Section 37-144-19, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
369 amended as follows:

370 37-144-19. The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and
371 Loan Repayment Program, acting through the commission, shall make
372 every effort to establish an initial practice entry support system
373 for participants in the scholarship program.

374 **SECTION 11.** Section 37-144-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
375 amended as follows:



376 37-144-21. This chapter may not be construed as granting the
377 Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship and Loan Repayment
378 Program or its governing commission any governing or
379 administrative authority over any program administered by any
380 college, university, medical school or residency program in this
381 state or any other program established by state law.

382 **SECTION 12.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
383 and after July 1, 2022.

