

By: Representative White

To: Public Health and Human
Services

HOUSE BILL NO. 1146

1 AN ACT TO BRING FORWARD SECTIONS 37-144-1 THROUGH 37-144-21,
2 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDE FOR THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL
3 PHYSICIANS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, FOR THE PURPOSE OF POSSIBLE
4 AMENDMENT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-144-1, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
7 brought forward as follows:

8 37-144-1. There is established the Mississippi Rural
9 Physicians Scholarship Program for the purpose of identifying and
10 recruiting qualified university and college students from rural
11 areas of the state for medical or osteopathic school
12 matriculation. The program shall consist of three (3) distinct
13 phases through which participants will progress, including:

- 14 (a) Undergraduate premedical education;
15 (b) Medical or osteopathic school and residency; and
16 (c) Post-residency entry into medical practice in a
17 rural or underserved area of the State of Mississippi.

18 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-144-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
19 brought forward as follows:



20 37-144-3. (1) The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
21 Program shall be administered by a commission to be known as the
22 "Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Commission." The
23 commission shall be directed by a board composed of the following
24 members:

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

29 (b) One (1) generalist physician appointed by and from
30 the membership of each of the following organizations, the term of
31 which shall be three (3) years and may be reappointed for one (1)
32 additional term:

33 (i) Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians;

34 (ii) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
35 Physicians;

36 (iii) Mississippi Chapter, American Academy of
37 Pediatrics;

38 (iv) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
39 OB-GYN;

40 (v) Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association;

41 (vi) Mississippi Osteopathic Association;

42 (c) Two (2) designees of the Dean of the University of
43 Mississippi School of Medicine whose terms are at the discretion



of the dean, at least one (1) of whom is a member of the University of Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee;

(d) Two (2) medical students, one (1) of whom shall be selected yearly through a process developed by the Dean of the School of Medicine in consultation with the Chairs of the Departments of Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, OB-GYN and Pediatrics, and one (1) of whom shall be nominated for a one-year term by the Mississippi Chapter of the Student National Medical Association and approved by the Dean of the University of Mississippi School of Medicine;

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

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

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

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

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



68 (4) All appointments to the commission must be made no later
69 than September 1, 2019. After the members are appointed, the
70 Chair of the Department of Family Medicine shall set a date for
71 the organizational meeting that is mutually acceptable to the
72 majority of the commission members. The organizational meeting
73 shall be for the purposes of organizing the commission and
74 establishing rules for transacting its business. A majority of
75 the members of the commission shall constitute a quorum at all
76 commission meetings. An affirmative vote of a majority of the
77 members present and voting shall be required in the adoption of
78 rules, reports and in any other actions taken by the commission.
79 At the organizational meeting, the commission shall elect a chair
80 and vice chair from the members appointed according to paragraphs
81 (a) through (d) of subsection (1). The chair shall serve for a
82 term of two (2) years, upon the expiration of which the vice chair
83 shall assume the office of chair.

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

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

91 (7) Members of the commission shall serve without
92 compensation but may be reimbursed, subject to the availability of



93 funding, for mileage and actual and necessary expenses incurred in
94 attending meetings of the commission.

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

99 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-144-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
100 brought forward as follows:

101 37-144-5. The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
102 Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

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

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

109 (c) Developing and implementing strategies and activities
110 for the identification and recruitment of students and for
111 marketing the program and for the implementation of the program.
112 In developing these strategies, the board shall seek the input of
113 various organizations and entities, including the Mississippi
114 State Medical Association, the Mississippi Academy of Family
115 Physicians, the Mississippi Chapters of the American College of
116 Physicians, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American
117 College of OB-GYN, the Mississippi Medical and Surgical



Association, the Mississippi Osteopathic Medicine Association and the American Psychiatric Association;

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 4. Section 37-144-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-144-7. (1) The commission shall develop and implement policies and procedures designed to recruit, identify and enroll



undergraduate students who demonstrate necessary interest, commitment, aptitude and academic achievement to pursue careers as family physicians or other generalist physicians in rural or medically underserved areas of Mississippi, and to develop and implement the programs designed to foster successful entry of participants into medical school, completion of medical school, enrollment into and completion of family medicine or other generalist residency, and establishment and maintenance of a career in family medicine or other generalist specialty in a rural or underserved area of Mississippi.

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

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

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



168 (5) In selecting participants for the program, the board may
169 only accept an applicant if his or her academic record and other
170 characteristics, if given consideration by the University of
171 Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee, would be
172 considered credible and competitive.

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

175 (7) Not less than fifteen (15) students will be admitted to
176 the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program each year,
177 provided that there are fifteen (15) or more qualified applicants
178 for the program.

179 (8) Upon the funding of sixty-one (61) or more rural
180 physicians scholarships by the Legislature and recognizing the
181 importance of balancing the needs of comprehensive primary care
182 along with a critical shortage of psychiatrists in Mississippi,
183 the commission may grant an exception for fourth-year medical or
184 osteopathic school (M4) students who demonstrate a desire to
185 practice psychiatry in rural Mississippi and who use a practice
186 model and enter the practice of medicine in a rural or underserved
187 area in Mississippi, as defined by the commission, beginning for
188 the M4 Class of 2020.

189 **SECTION 5.** Section 37-144-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
190 brought forward as follows:



191 37-144-9. (1) Participants must adhere to the policies and
192 practices as stipulated by the commission to continue in the
193 program.

194 (2) Students in the program may receive tuition or other
195 financial support that may be provided by the commission. If a
196 student in the program is admitted to and completes medical or
197 osteopathic school, any tuition or other educational and living
198 support provided to the student by the commission will be
199 forgiven. However, if the student is not successful in being
200 accepted into medical or osteopathic school within three (3) years
201 of entry into the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship
202 Program, or if the student otherwise breaches his or her agreement
203 with the commission, all financial assistance provided to the
204 student must be repaid according to policies adopted by the board.

205 **SECTION 6.** Section 37-144-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
206 brought forward as follows:

207 37-144-11. (1) Students in the program may apply to any
208 medical or osteopathic school that is accredited by the Liaison
209 Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or the American Osteopathic
210 Association (AOA).

211 (2) Students in the program seeking admission to the
212 University of Mississippi School of Medicine shall be eligible for
213 a special admissions process pursuant to criteria established by
214 the School of Medicine Admissions Committee which will include



special consideration of the attributes of participation in the program.

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

SECTION 7. Section 37-144-13, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-144-13. (1) Subject to the availability of funding, students in the program who successfully matriculate to medical or osteopathic school are eligible for ongoing financial support in accordance with policies and requirements of the commission and in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. The number of students to be supported at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine and at other schools will be established by policy prescribed by the commission.

(2) Subject to the availability of funding, students enrolled at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine may receive tuition support, funding to assist with the cost of books



and a living stipend, as prescribed by policy of the commission and in accordance with applicable regulations. Preferences for ongoing funding must be given to those students admitted to the University of Mississippi School of Medicine.

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

SECTION 8. Section 37-144-15, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-144-15. Medical and osteopathic students in the program must enter family medicine or other generalist residency programs according to their choice of specialty. Depending upon the availability of funds, students who successfully enter residency programs which have been approved by the commission may receive further financial support from the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program subject to applicable rules and policies of the commission. All funding for financial support from the



commission to participants during their residency must be disbursed in accordance with applicable regulations.

SECTION 9. Section 37-144-17, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

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

(2) Upon entering the practice of medicine, a participant in the program must serve in a health professional shortage area (HPSA), medically underserved area (MUA), or rural area otherwise approved for practice under subsection (1) of this section for a number of years which corresponds to the number of years, not to exceed five (5), for which the participant received funding through the program. A participant who completes residency outside the State of Mississippi who fails to enter the practice of medicine as required under this section shall be deemed in breach of contract and shall be liable for the immediate repayment



of all financial assistance provided to the participant through the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program, including assistance provided during undergraduate school, as well as in medical or osteopathic school, along with other penalties that may be prescribed in policy by the board. Any participant who fails to complete the period of practice for which he or she is obligated to provide services in a health professional shortage area (HPSA) or a medically underserved area (MUA) in exchange for financial assistance received through the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program shall be liable for the repayment of all financial assistance provided to the participant through the program, along with other penalties that may be prescribed by the commission, an amount which shall be reduced on a pro rata basis for actual years of practice by the physician in the area designated by the commission.

SECTION 10. Section 37-144-19, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

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

SECTION 11. Section 37-144-21, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-144-21. This chapter may not be construed as granting the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program or its governing



314 commission any governing or administrative authority over any
315 program administered by any college, university, medical school or
316 residency program in this state or any other program established
317 by state law.

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

