

By: Representatives Bennett, Creekmore To: Education;
 IV, Mickens, Crawford, Crudup, Summers, Appropriations
 McLean, Porter, Powell, Williamson,
 McCarty, Aguirre, Anderson (110th),
 Anderson (122nd), Arnold, Bailey, Bain,
 Barnett, Barton, Beckett, Bell (21st), Bell (65th), Blackmon,
 Bomgar, Bounds, Boyd, Burnett, Busby, Byrd, Calvert, Carpenter,
 Clark, Clarke, Cockerham, Criswell, Currie, Darnell, Denton,
 Deweese, Eubanks, Eure, Evans (45th), Evans (91st), Faulkner,
 Felsher, Ford (54th), Ford (73rd), Foster, Gibbs (36th), Gibbs
 (72nd), Goodin, Guice, Gunn, Hale, Haney, Harness, Hines, Hobgood-
 Wilkes, Holloway, Hood, Horan, Horne, Huddleston, Jackson,
 Johnson, Karriem, Kinkade, Ladner, Lamar, Lancaster, Mangold,
 Massengill, McCray, McGee, McKnight, McLeod, Miles, Mims, Morgan,
 Newman, Oliver, Osborne, Owen, Paden, Patterson, Pigott, Read,
 Reynolds, Roberson, Robinson, Rosebud, Rushing, Sanders, Sanford,
 Scoggin, Scott, Shanks, Smith, Steverson, Straughter, Taylor,
 Thompson, Tubb, Tullos, Turner, Walker, Wallace, Watson,
 Weathersby, White, Williams-Barnes, Wright, Yancey, Yates, Young,
 Zuber

HOUSE BILL NO. 1313

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE "FOSTERING ACCESS AND INSPIRING TRUE
 2 HOPE (FAITH) SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ACT," TO PROVIDE TUITION
 3 ASSISTANCE FOR ATTENDANCE AT APPROVED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL
 4 INSTITUTIONS OR PUBLIC WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAMS TO ELIGIBLE
 5 STUDENTS WHO WERE ENTERED INTO FOSTER CARE ON OR AFTER REACHING 14
 6 YEARS OF AGE AND WHO HAVE NOT REACHED 26 YEARS OF AGE OR LIVED AT
 7 A QUALIFIED RESIDENTIAL CHILD CARE AGENCY AFTER REACHING 14 YEARS
 8 OF AGE AND WHO HAVE NOT REACHED 26 YEARS OF AGE; TO PROVIDE THAT
 9 THE MISSISSIPPI POSTSECONDARY STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD
 10 SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; TO PRESCRIBE THE CRITERIA FOR
 11 INITIAL AND CONTINUED ELIGIBILITY FOR RECEIPT OF A FAITH
 12 SCHOLARSHIP; TO PROVIDE THAT THE NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS ALLOWED
 13 SHALL BE LIMITED TO 150 NEW RECIPIENTS PER YEAR UNTIL THE PROGRAM
 14 REACHES A MAXIMUM OF 900 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS; TO REQUIRE
 15 APPROVED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION TO PROVIDE SUMMER
 16 AND HOLIDAY ROOM AND BOARD ACCOMMODATION FOR RECIPIENTS OF FAITH
 17 SCHOLARSHIPS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

19 **SECTION 1.** This chapter shall be known and may be cited as
 20 the "Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship
 21 Program Act."



22 **SECTION 2.** As used in this chapter, the following terms
23 shall have the meaning ascribed in this section, unless context of
24 use clearly requires otherwise:

25 (a) "Approved postsecondary educational institution"
26 means any public state-supported institution of higher learning,
27 community or junior college, or public workforce training
28 facility. The term does not include private or proprietary
29 colleges or universities.

30 (b) "Board" means the Mississippi Postsecondary Student
31 Financial Assistance Board established in Section 37-106-9, which
32 is authorized and empowered to administer the provisions of
33 Chapter 106, Title 37, Mississippi Code of 1972.

34 (c) "Director" means the individual designated by the
35 Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning to
36 administer the provisions of the various financial assistance
37 programs by promulgating the necessary rules and regulations for
38 their effective administration.

39 (d) "Department" means the Mississippi Department of
40 Child Protection Services.

41 (e) "Eligible student" means:

42 (i) Any individual, currently or formerly in the
43 state foster care program, who entered such program after
44 attaining the age of fourteen (14) years but has not reached
45 twenty-six (26) years of age, and who meets all initial or



46 continuing eligibility requirements of the scholarship and enrolls
47 in an approved postsecondary educational institution; or

48 (ii) Any individual who is not currently or
49 formerly in the state foster care program, who was placed by their
50 parent or parents, guardian, court of competent jurisdiction, or
51 other person or individual or entity acting in the best interest
52 of the individual in a qualified residential child care agency
53 before reaching their twenty-sixth birthday and who did reside in
54 such a residential child care agency after their fourteenth
55 birthday, and who meets all initial or continuing eligibility
56 requirements of the scholarship and enrolls in an approved
57 postsecondary educational institution; or

58 (iii) Any individual adopted from the state foster
59 care program, or adopted while residing at a residential child
60 care agency as described in subsection (2) at the age of fourteen
61 (14) and who has not reached twenty-six (26) years of age.

62 (f) "Qualified residential child care agency" means an
63 entity that provides a home for children and is licensed by the
64 Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services.

65 (g) "Scholarship" means the Fostering Access and
66 Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship.

67 **SECTION 3.** (1) The Mississippi Postsecondary Student
68 Financial Assistance Board, with the assistance of the Mississippi
69 Department Child Protection Services shall develop and administer
70 the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) scholarship



71 program for eligible students. Commencing with the 2023-2024
72 academic year, the program, on behalf of participants, shall do
73 either of the following:

74 (a) Pay for tuition and required fees at any public
75 two-year or four-year approved postsecondary educational
76 institution in the state; or

77 (b) Pay required fees for job training courses or skill
78 certifications that are offered by any public two-year or
79 four-year approved postsecondary educational institution in the
80 state, or other publicly funded workforce training programs in the
81 state which are not considered an associate's degree program,
82 provided that the courses or certifications are first approved by
83 the board.

84 (2) Payments of tuition and required fees are considered
85 program scholarships.

86 **SECTION 4.** The scholarship program shall include a mentor
87 service administered by the department as a support system for
88 participants of the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope
89 (FAITH) scholarship program. This service shall include mentors
90 who shall be compensated by the department, as employees or
91 contractors, to help participants adapt to independent living,
92 academics and other college or university activities.

93 **SECTION 5.** (1) Appropriations for the program shall be used
94 by the board on behalf of participants in each fiscal year to pay
95 public two-year and four-year approved postsecondary educational



96 institutions or other publicly funded workforce training programs
97 in the state for benefits extended to eligible students by the
98 Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) scholarship
99 program. The department may not spend appropriations for the
100 program for purposes other than those listed in this section. Any
101 monies appropriated to the department for FAITH scholarships that
102 are unspent at the end of a fiscal year shall not lapse into the
103 State General Fund, but shall be carried over and be available for
104 expenditure by the board in the succeeding fiscal year, subject to
105 appropriation therefor by the Legislature. The board shall
106 develop rules for ensuring that expenses of the FAITH scholarship
107 program in a fiscal year do not exceed funding for the program in
108 that fiscal year. For that purpose, and any other provision of
109 this chapter to the contrary notwithstanding, the board may limit
110 the acceptance of applications for FAITH scholarships and may
111 limit the award of scholarships.

112 (2) Initial recipients shall be selected on a first-come,
113 first-served basis of all eligible applicants, which shall be
114 limited to only one hundred fifty (150) individuals receiving
115 scholarship funds. In the second and subsequent years of an
116 applicant's continued eligibility, priority consideration shall
117 first be given to renewal applicants. In any given year only one
118 hundred fifty (150) new applicants shall be eligible to receive
119 funds under the program, until the program reaches its maximum
120 limitation of nine hundred (900) scholarship recipients.



121 **SECTION 6.** The program shall pay one hundred percent (100%)
122 of the tuition and required fees, including room and board, and if
123 available, a meal plan, for an eligible student as governed by
124 rules promulgated by the board, in conjunction with the
125 department. In no event shall tuition and required fees be paid
126 pursuant to this section for more than seventy-two (72) academic
127 credit hours toward an associate's degree or one hundred
128 forty-four (144) academic credit hours toward a bachelor's degree
129 for each participant. The program shall only pay tuition and fees
130 relating to an undergraduate degree. Scholarship funds may be
131 disbursed only if sufficient funding for the FAITH scholarship
132 program is available.

133 **SECTION 7.** (1) (a) To be eligible to participate in the
134 program, a scholarship applicant shall satisfy all of the
135 following:

136 (i) Be in the legal custody of the foster care
137 program of the department at the time of graduation from high
138 school or earning a General Educational Development (GED) high
139 school equivalency certification; or residing in a qualified
140 residential child care agency as described in Section 2(e)(ii) of
141 this act at the time of graduation for high school or earning a
142 General Educational Development (GED) high school equivalency
143 certification; or in the permanent legal custody of the foster
144 care program of the department when his or her adoption is



145 finalized, on or after his or her fourteenth birthday, and has
146 graduated from high school or earned a GED certification;

147 (ii) Is younger than twenty-six (26) years of age
148 at the start of the semester, workforce training program or
149 certification program for which tuition or fees are requested from
150 the program;

151 (iii) Is accepted for enrollment in a
152 degree-granting, workforce training or certification program, or
153 is enrolled and working toward a degree, certificate, or
154 completion of a job training program, at a public two-year or
155 four-year approved postsecondary educational institution or
156 publicly funded workforce training program in the state; and

157 (iv) Has completed and submitted to the United
158 States Department of Education a Free Application for Federal
159 Student Aid (FAFSA), or the equivalent, before each year in which
160 he or she receives a FAITH scholarship. He or she shall have
161 applied for all federal student financial aid grants, including
162 Pell grants, Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants and
163 Education and Training Vouchers, identified as being available for
164 the student's application by the board or by the Office of Federal
165 Student Aid within the United States Department of Education, or
166 its successor agency.

167 (b) In addition to satisfying the eligibility
168 requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, any scholarship
169 applicant who earns less than an 18 ACT composite score or less



170 than a 2.5 GPA after his or her high school graduation must begin
171 his or her postsecondary education at a community or junior
172 college or workforce training program.

173 (2) To remain eligible for participation in the program
174 after the first year of enrollment at an approved postsecondary
175 educational institution or working training program, an applicant
176 shall:

177 (a) Make adequate progress toward the completion of a
178 degree, certification, or workforce training program as determined
179 by rules promulgated by the board, by maintaining a 2.0 GPA for
180 consecutive or nonconsecutive semesters of enrollment, up to six
181 (6) years, except as otherwise provided in subsection (4) of this
182 section;

183 (b) In accordance with requirements established
184 pursuant to rules promulgated by the board, complete at least:

185 (i) Ten (10) hours per week in the performance of
186 a work study assignment;

187 (ii) Ten (10) hours per week of paid employment;

188 (iii) Ten (10) hours per week of volunteer work;

189 or

190 (iv) A combination of work study, paid employment
191 or volunteer work equal to ten (10) hours per week; and

192 (c) Remain in good standing with the policies
193 established by the approved postsecondary educational institution



194 or other workforce training or certification program in the state
195 in which he or she is enrolled.

196 (3) Except when extended in accordance with subsection (4)
197 of this section, a student shall be eligible to receive a FAITH
198 scholarship for a maximum of one hundred forty-four (144)
199 consecutive or nonconsecutive academic credit hours earned, after
200 first admittance to any approved postsecondary educational
201 institution if satisfactory progress is achieved or maintained in
202 accordance with the provisions of subsection (2) of this section,
203 up to age twenty-six (26).

204 (4) (a) The expiration of a student's eligibility shall be
205 extended by the number of academic terms the institution
206 determines the student was unable to enroll for or complete due to
207 serving:

208 (i) On active duty status in the United States
209 Armed Forces;

210 (ii) As an officer in the Commissioned Corps of
211 the United States Public Health Service; or

212 (iii) On active service in the Peace Corps or the
213 AmeriCorps.

214 (b) The original age limitation under subsection (3) of
215 this section shall be extended by the total number of years during
216 which the student was on active duty status. The number of months
217 served on active duty status shall be rounded up to the next



218 higher year to determine the maximum length of eligibility
219 extension allowed.

220 (5) Approved postsecondary educational institutions shall
221 provide summer and holiday room and board accommodations for
222 students enrolled at such institutions on FAITH scholarships.
223 However, no such requirement shall be placed upon workforce
224 training programs, in remaining consistent with the provisions of
225 the John H. Chaffee Foster Care Program for Successful Transition
226 to Adulthood (42 USCS 677).

227 **SECTION 8.** A scholarship awarded pursuant to this chapter
228 may not be reduced by the amount of any federal aid, scholarship
229 funds, or any federal or state grant funds otherwise received by
230 the person or by the amount of any private donations made to
231 assist the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH)
232 program.

233 **SECTION 9.** Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH)
234 scholarship funds shall be applied to tuition and mandatory fees
235 before any other grant, loan, voucher or scholarship the student
236 may be awarded to attend an approved postsecondary educational
237 institution in the state or publicly funded state workforce
238 training program.

239 **SECTION 10.** Any other provision of this chapter to the
240 contrary notwithstanding, an otherwise eligible person who earns
241 grants, scholarships or other awards, excluding loans, Pell
242 Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants or state



243 grants, sufficient to pay one hundred percent (100%) of his or her
244 tuition, room and board, and other fees at an approved
245 postsecondary educational institution in the state or publicly
246 funded state workforce training program, as governed by rules
247 promulgated by the board, may not participate in the Fostering
248 Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) scholarship program.

249 **SECTION 11.** The director of the board, in conjunction with
250 the Department of Child Protection Services, may promulgate rules
251 as necessary to implement and administer this chapter.

252 **SECTION 12.** Nothing in this section shall be construed to:

253 (a) Guarantee acceptance of or entrance into any
254 approved postsecondary educational institution or publicly funded
255 workforce training or certification program for a foster or
256 adopted child;

257 (b) Limit the participation of a foster, qualified
258 residential child care or adopted student in any other program of
259 financial assistance for postsecondary education;

260 (c) Require any approved postsecondary educational
261 institution to waive costs or fees relating to room and board; or

262 (d) Restrict any approved postsecondary educational
263 institution, the Mississippi Postsecondary Student Financial
264 Assistance Board, or the Department of Child Protection Services
265 from accessing other sources of financial assistance, except
266 loans, that may be available to a foster or adopted student.



267 **SECTION 13.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
268 and after July 1, 2022.

