

By: Representatives McCarty, Hulum, McLean

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 729

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE "MISSISSIPPI SUCCESSFUL TECHNIQUES
2 RESULTING IN DELIVERING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY
3 (STRIDE) SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM" FOR THE PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING AND
4 MAKING SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS WHO BECOME ELIGIBLE TO
5 PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM FOR COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH DUAL-CREDIT
6 AND DUAL-ENROLLMENT OPTION, CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION COURSES
7 THAT LEAD TO INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION AND OVERLOAD COURSES; TO
8 ESTABLISH THE MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR EACH SUBSIDIARY
9 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, TO PROVIDE THAT THE PROGRAMS SHALL BE
10 RESPECTIVELY ADMINISTERED BY THE MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE
11 BOARD AND THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-71-7
12 AND 37-71-9, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CLARIFY PROVISIONS OF
13 THE "MISSISSIPPI LEARN TO EARN ACT" PERTAINING TO APPLICATION
14 PROCEDURES IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
15 "MISSISSIPPI SUCCESSFUL TECHNIQUES RESULTING IN DELIVERING
16 EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYABILITY (STRIDE) SCHOLARSHIP
17 PROGRAM"; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

19 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known, and may be cited as the
20 "Mississippi Successful Techniques Resulting in Delivering
21 Excellence in Education and Employability (STRIDE) Scholarship
22 Program."

23 **SECTION 2.** There is created the Mississippi Successful
24 Techniques Resulting in Delivering Excellence in Education and



25 Employability (STRIDE) Scholarship Program, which such program
26 shall consist of:

27 (a) The Mississippi STRIDE College Scholarship Program
28 provided for under Section 3 of this act;

29 (b) The Mississippi STRIDE Opportunity Scholarship
30 Program provided for under Section 4 of this act; and

31 (c) The Mississippi STRIDE Graduation Scholarship
32 Program provided for under Section 6 of this act.

33 **SECTION 3.** (1) Dual-credit courses at a Mississippi public
34 community or junior college shall be funded by the Mississippi
35 STRIDE College Scholarship Fund, which shall be administered by
36 the Mississippi Community College Board. The board shall develop
37 rules and regulations to implement the program for participating
38 public community and junior colleges that provide dual-credit and
39 dual-enrollment opportunities to students in Grades 9 through 12
40 who meet certain qualifications. The Mississippi Community
41 College Board shall create a platform for interested students to
42 apply online for the scholarships. Funding from approved
43 scholarships shall be awarded to the credit of the public
44 community or junior college providing the dual-credit instruction.
45 Public community and junior colleges shall be the sole provider of
46 dual-credit for students participating in the program. Funding
47 for this program will be administered through a special fund
48 established at the Mississippi Community College Board.



49 (2) Subject to appropriation, for the 2023-2024 academic
50 year, each academic dual-credit student scholarship shall be
51 funded at One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150.00) per semester hour of
52 credit, and for each academic year thereafter, the public
53 community and junior colleges shall adjust the per semester credit
54 hour rate based on system-wide actual tuition costs.

55 (3) All eligible public high school students shall be
56 approved for participation in the Mississippi STRIDE College
57 Scholarship Program, subject to the following criteria:

58 (a) All dual-credit standards including, but not
59 limited to, academic and eligibility requirements, course
60 requirements, faculty and institutional qualifications and
61 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on
62 Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation criteria as provided in the
63 Procedures Manual for the State of Mississippi Dual-enrollment and
64 Accelerated Programs, jointly adopted by the Board of Trustees of
65 State Institutions of Higher Learning and the Mississippi
66 Community College Board, or a subsequent document, must be adhered
67 to.

68 (b) Students participating in the program must reside
69 within the State of Mississippi.

70 (c) Students participating in the program are
71 responsible for books, supplies and transportation costs.

72 (4) Scholarship funds shall be dispersed on a first-come,
73 first-served basis with minimum funding for each student being



74 sufficient to take at least one (1) semester course per academic
75 year.

76 (5) If a student fails to successfully complete a course
77 paid for by the Mississippi STRIDE College Scholarship Program,
78 the student must pay for and successfully earn credit or complete
79 one (1) like course before being eligible for additional course
80 participation. Repeated and remedial courses or examinations are
81 not eligible for funding through the program.

82 **SECTION 4.** (1) Career technical education and workforce
83 training courses at a Mississippi public community or junior
84 college shall be funded by the Mississippi STRIDE Opportunity
85 Scholarship Fund, which shall be administered by the Mississippi
86 Community College Board. The board shall develop rules and
87 regulations to implement the program for participating public
88 community and junior colleges that provide dual-credit and
89 dual-enrollment opportunities to students in Grades 9 through 12
90 who meet certain qualifications. The Mississippi Community
91 College Board shall create a platform for interested students to
92 apply online for the scholarships. Funding from approved
93 scholarships shall be awarded to the credit of the public
94 community or junior college providing the dual-credit instruction.
95 Public community and junior colleges shall be the sole provider of
96 dual credit for students participating in the program. Funding
97 for this program will be administered through a special fund
98 established at the Mississippi Community College Board.



99 (2) Subject to appropriation, each career and technical
100 dual-credit student scholarship shall be funded at Two Hundred
101 Fifty Dollars (\$250.00) per semester hour of credit beginning in
102 the 2023-2024 academic year.

103 (3) All eligible public high school students shall be
104 approved for participation in the Mississippi STRIDE Opportunity
105 Scholarship Program, subject to the following criteria:

106 (a) All dual-credit standards including, but not
107 limited to, career and technical eligibility requirements, course
108 requirements, faculty and institutional qualifications and
109 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on
110 Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation criteria as provided in the
111 Procedures Manual for the State of Mississippi Dual-enrollment and
112 Accelerated Programs, jointly adopted by the Board of Trustees of
113 State Institutions of Higher Learning and the Mississippi
114 Community College Board, or a subsequent document, must be adhered
115 to.

116 (b) In addition, eligible courses must:

117 (i) Lead to an industry-recognized certificate,
118 license or degree as approved by the Mississippi Office of
119 Workforce Development;

120 (ii) Be courses that are not otherwise available
121 at the student's high school; and

122 (iii) Allow high school-aged students to
123 participate.



124 (c) Laboratories designed for providing instruction in
125 career and technical courses must meet community and junior
126 colleges' standards of quality.

127 (d) Students participating in the program must reside
128 within the State of Mississippi.

129 (e) Students participating in the program are
130 responsible for books, tools, supplies and transportation costs.

131 (4) Scholarship funds shall be dispersed on a first-come,
132 first-served basis with minimum funding for each student being
133 sufficient to take at least one (1) semester course per academic
134 year.

135 (5) If a student fails to successfully complete a course
136 paid for by the Mississippi STRIDE Opportunity Scholarship
137 Program, the student must pay for and successfully earn credit or
138 complete one (1) like course before being eligible for additional
139 course participation. Repeated and remedial courses or
140 examinations are not eligible for funding through the program.

141 **SECTION 5.** Public school personnel shall assist parents in
142 the process of enrolling students in such courses. Each
143 participating student's high school transcript at the public
144 school at which the student is enrolled shall include the credits
145 earned and grades received by the student for any dual-credit
146 courses taken pursuant to this section. For an eligible course to
147 be transcribed as meeting the requirements of a core subject as
148 identified in administrative rule, the course must meet the



149 approved content standards for the applicable subject and grade
150 level.

151 **SECTION 6.** (1) Mississippi STRIDE Graduation courses for
152 Mississippi public school students shall be funded by the
153 Mississippi STRIDE Graduation Scholarship Fund, which shall be
154 administered by the State Board of Education. The State Board of
155 Education shall create a platform for interested students to apply
156 online for the scholarships and to enroll in courses. Funding
157 from approved scholarships shall be awarded to the credit of
158 participating educational providers. Funding for this program
159 will be administered through a special fund at the State Board of
160 Education.

161 (2) All eligible public school students in Grades 7 through
162 12 who reside in the State of Mississippi shall be approved for
163 participation in the Mississippi STRIDE Graduation Scholarship
164 Program. Students participating in the program are responsible
165 for books, tools, supplies and transportation costs.

166 (3) Scholarship funds shall be dispersed on a first-come,
167 first-served basis and may be used for:

- 168 (a) Overload courses;
- 169 (b) Challenge courses;
- 170 (c) Learn to Earn courses, including apprenticeships,
171 internships, and alternative learning courses;
- 172 (d) College entrance examinations;
- 173 (e) Preliminary college entrance examinations;



174 (f) Career technical certificate and licensing
175 examinations that lead to an industry-recognized certificate,
176 license or degree as approved by the Mississippi Office of
177 Workforce Development;

178 (g) Postsecondary credit-bearing examinations,
179 including advanced placement (AP); international baccalaureate
180 (IB); Cambridge International; and college-level examination
181 program (CLEP).

182 (4) Each local school board shall set forth criteria by
183 which a student may take an overload course. A student must take
184 and successfully be completing a full credit load within a given
185 school year to be eligible for funding of an overload course. An
186 overload course must be taken for high school credit to be
187 eligible for funding. The scholarship distribution for an
188 overload course may not exceed Two Hundred Twenty-five Dollars
189 (\$225.00) per overload course. To qualify as an eligible overload
190 course for the program, the course must:

191 (a) Be offered by an accredited provider; and

192 (b) Be taught by an individual certified to teach the
193 grade and subject area of the course in Mississippi.

194 (5) Each local school board shall set forth criteria by
195 which a student may challenge a course. If a student successfully
196 meets the criteria set forth by the board of the public school,
197 then the student shall be counted as having completed all required
198 coursework for that course. The public school shall be funded for



199 such students based upon either actual hours of attendance or the
200 course that the student has successfully passed, whichever is more
201 advantageous to the public school, up to the maximum of one (1)
202 full-time student.

203 (6) The State Department of Education shall maintain a list
204 of eligible college entrance examinations and preliminary college
205 entrance examinations and costs, provided that a student may not
206 use funds provided under this section to take the same examination
207 more than once. Eligible costs include the cost of the
208 examination, proctor fees, and administrative fees. Eligible
209 examinations include the SAT, PSAT, ACT and other similar
210 examinations identified by the department.

211 (7) Mississippi STRIDE Graduation Scholarships may not be
212 used to pay an amount that exceeds the price to the student of
213 such courses and examinations pursuant to the limitations stated
214 in this section. These monies shall not supplant existing program
215 funds. No later than December 1, 2023, the State Department of
216 Education shall annually report to the Education Committees of the
217 Senate and the House of Representatives details regarding the
218 number of students benefiting from assistance with the cost of
219 overload courses, challenge courses, Learn to Earn courses and
220 examinations. The report shall include the number of credits
221 awarded and amounts paid pursuant to this section during the
222 previous school year. The report also shall be provided to the



223 other members of the Legislature upon request and posted on the
224 department's website for the general public to view.

225 (8) Public schools, shall be reimbursed, as applicable, up
226 to the stated limits, within one hundred twenty-five (125) days of
227 receiving the necessary data upon which reimbursements may be paid
228 for overload courses, challenge courses and Learn to Earn courses.
229 The submission method and timelines of reimbursement data shall be
230 determined by the State Board of Education. Payments will be made
231 only for activity occurring and reported within each fiscal year.

232 (9) Average daily attendance shall be counted as normal for
233 students participating in dual-credit courses pursuant to this
234 section.

235 (10) If a student fails to successfully complete a course
236 paid for by the Mississippi STRIDE Graduation Scholarship Program,
237 the student must pay for and successfully earn credit or complete
238 one (1) like course before being eligible for additional course
239 participation. Repeated and remedial courses or examinations are
240 not eligible for funding through the program.

241 (11) If a student fails to take an examination paid for by
242 the Mississippi STRIDE Graduation Scholarship Program, the student
243 must pay for and pass the test before being eligible for
244 additional participation in the program.

245 (12) Public school personnel shall assist parents in the
246 process of enrolling students in overload, challenge and Learn to
247 Earn courses. Each participating student's high school transcript



248 at the public school at which the student is enrolled shall
249 include the credits earned and grades received by the student for
250 these courses taken pursuant to this section. For an eligible
251 course to be transcribed as meeting the requirements of a core
252 subject as identified in administrative rule, the course must meet
253 the approved content standards for the applicable subject and
254 grade level.

255 **SECTION 7.** The State Board of Education shall promulgate
256 rules to implement the provisions of this chapter so as to
257 maximize participation in the Mississippi Successful Techniques
258 Resulting in Delivering Excellence in Education and Employability
259 (STRIDE) Scholarship Program.

260 **SECTION 8.** Public schools shall establish timelines and
261 requirements for participation in the Mississippi Successful
262 Techniques Resulting in Delivering Excellence in Education and
263 Employability (STRIDE) Scholarship Program, including implementing
264 procedures for the appropriate transcription of credits, reporting
265 of program participation and financial transaction requirements.
266 Public schools shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that any
267 student who considers participating in the program also considers
268 the challenges and time necessary to succeed in the program, and
269 schools shall make reasonable efforts to include guidance on how
270 the student's participation in the program contributes to
271 prospective college and career pathways. Such efforts shall be



272 performed prior to a student's participation in the program and
273 throughout the student's involvement in the program.

274 **SECTION 9.** Section 37-71-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
275 amended as follows:

276 37-71-7. * * *

277 (* * *1) Each local school board * * * shall adopt an
278 Extended Learning Opportunities policy to include alternative
279 educational opportunities for course credit that recognizes
280 learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom
281 through apprenticeships, internships or pre-apprenticeships, and
282 grants elective credit for those alternative learning
283 opportunities. * * * The policy shall:

284 (a) Provide for an application process for entities to
285 submit proposals for alternative educational opportunities that
286 will qualify for elective course credit;

287 (b) Define which entities are eligible to submit
288 applications for alternative educational opportunities, which such
289 entities shall include, but not be limited to:

290 (i) Nonprofit organizations;

291 (ii) Businesses with established locations in the
292 state;

293 (iii) Trade associations;

294 (iv) Parents of students involved in programs that
295 may otherwise qualify for alternative educational opportunities;



296 (v) Teachers involved in programs outside of the
297 traditional classroom; and

298 (vi) School personnel involved in programs outside
299 of the traditional classroom * * *;

300 (c) Provide for the criteria used to evaluate the
301 alternative educational opportunity;

302 (d) Describe any communication and collaboration needed
303 with local school districts to implement alternative educational
304 opportunities * * *;

305 (e) Place requirements on the entity such as background
306 checks for key personnel and minimum accountability standards; and

307 (f) Provide a process for student credit transfer.

308 (* * *2) The local school board is authorized to approve or
309 deny an application for an alternative educational
310 opportunity. * * *

311 (* * *3) The State Department of Education shall have the
312 authority to audit approved alternative educational programs at
313 any time. If the audit results in findings that an approved
314 program is not meeting the provisions of this chapter * * *, then
315 the local school board shall disqualify the program immediately.

316 **SECTION 10.** Section 37-71-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
317 amended as follows:

318 37-71-9. * * *

319 * * * The State Department of Education shall provide an
320 annual report detailing the progress that has been made in each



321 school district in providing alternative courses, programs and
322 opportunities or apprenticeships. The report shall be provided to
323 the Chairmen of the Senate and House Education Committees no later
324 than December 1 of each year, beginning December 1, * * * 2023.
325 The report also shall be provided to the other members of the
326 Legislature upon request and posted on the department's website
327 for the general public to view.

328 **SECTION 11.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
329 and after July 1, 2023.

