

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.

