

By: Representative Scoggin

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 771

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-75, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
 2 TO REVISE PROVISIONS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATIVE PLAN
 3 (HELP) GRANT TO PRESCRIBE AWARD MINIMUMS BASED ON CLASSIFICATION
 4 AND ENROLLMENT STATUS; TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-29, MISSISSIPPI
 5 CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE PROVISIONS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT
 6 TUITION ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF STRENGTHENING
 7 MISSISSIPPI'S WORKFORCE PIPELINE; TO PROVIDE MORE MISSISSIPPIANS
 8 ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE EDUCATION PATHWAYS FOR IN-DEMAND CAREERS; TO
 9 RENAME THE PROGRAM AS THE "MTAG WORKS GRANT PROGRAM"; TO ESTABLISH
 10 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR RECIPIENTS TO QUALIFY FOR GRANT AWARDS;
 11 TO PROVIDE FOR BONUSES FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN EDUCATION PROGRAMS
 12 THAT LEAD TO EMPLOYMENT IN HIGH-NEED OR HIGH-DEMAND FIELD; AND FOR
 13 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

15 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-75, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
 16 amended as follows:

17 37-106-75. (1) The Legislature hereby establishes the
 18 Higher Education Legislative Plan Grant Program.

19 (2) For purposes of this section:

20 (a) "Institution of higher education" shall mean any
 21 state institution of higher learning or public community or junior
 22 college, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit



23 two-year or four-year college or university located in the State
24 of Mississippi approved by the board.

25 (b) "Tuition" shall mean the semester or trimester or
26 term charges and all required fees imposed by an institution of
27 higher education as a condition of enrollment by all
28 students. * * *

29 (3) * * * The state * * * shall make awards to students who
30 enroll at any approved state institution of higher education to
31 pursue an academic undergraduate degree who apply for the
32 assistance under the program and who meet all of the following
33 qualifications:

34 (a) Resident of the State of Mississippi. Resident
35 status for the purpose of receiving assistance under this chapter
36 shall be determined in the same manner as resident status for
37 tuition purposes in Sections 37-103-1 through 37-103-29, with the
38 exception of Section 37-103-17;

39 (b) Graduate from high school within the two (2) years
40 preceding the application with a minimum cumulative grade point
41 average of 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale;

42 * * *

43 (* * * c) Have a composite score on the American
44 College Test of at least twenty (20) on the 1989 version or an
45 equivalent concordant value on an enhanced version of such test;

46 (* * * d) Have no criminal record, except for
47 misdemeanor traffic violations; and



48 * * *

49 (4) * * * The state * * * shall make awards to students who
50 enroll at any approved state institution of higher education to
51 pursue an academic undergraduate degree or associate degree who
52 apply for assistance under the program and who meet the
53 qualifications established in * * * subsection (3) * * *. The
54 award may be applied to tuition, rooms, meals, books, materials
55 and fees, and any other education-related expenses as long as the
56 student's total award package does not exceed the student's cost
57 of attendance as determined by the institution.

58 (5) Award amounts for junior and senior students attending
59 public four-year universities in the State of Mississippi shall be
60 equal to tuition and required fees. Award amounts for junior and
61 senior students attending four-year regionally accredited,
62 state-approved, nonprofit colleges and universities in the State
63 of Mississippi shall be equal to the average tuition and required
64 fees charged by the state's public four-year universities. Award
65 amounts for freshmen and sophomore students attending public
66 two-year colleges in the State of Mississippi shall be equal to
67 tuition and required fees. Award amounts for freshmen and
68 sophomore students attending public four-year universities or
69 regionally accredited, state-approved nonprofit two-year or
70 four-year colleges and universities in the State of Mississippi,
71 shall be equal to the average tuition and required fees charged by
72 the state's public two-year colleges.



73 (* * * 6) To maintain continued state payment of * * * the
74 grant, once enrolled in an institution of higher education, a
75 student shall meet all of the following requirements:

76 (a) Make steady academic progress toward a degree,
77 earning not less than the minimum number of hours of credit
78 required for full-time standing in each academic period requiring
79 such enrollment;

80 (b) Maintain continuous enrollment for not less than
81 two (2) semesters or three (3) quarters in each successive
82 academic year, unless granted an exception for cause by the board;

83 (c) Have a cumulative grade point average of at least
84 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of the first academic
85 year and thereafter maintain such a cumulative grade point average
86 as evaluated at the end of each academic year;

87 (d) Have no criminal record, except for misdemeanor
88 traffic violations; and

89 (e) Be in financial need.

90 (* * * 7) The provisions of this section shall be
91 administered by the board. The board may promulgate rules for all
92 matters necessary for the implementation of this section. By
93 rule, the board shall provide for:

94 (a) A mechanism for informing all students of the
95 availability of the assistance provided under this section early
96 enough in their schooling that a salutary motivational effect is
97 possible; and



98 (b) Applications, forms, financial audit procedures,
99 eligibility and other program audit procedures and other matters
100 related to efficient operation * * *.

101 * * *

102 (* * *8) An applicant shall be found to be in financial
103 need if:

104 (a) The family has one (1) child under the age of
105 twenty-one (21), and the annual adjusted gross income of the
106 family is less than Forty-two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars
107 (\$42,500.00); or

108 (b) The family has an annual adjusted gross income of
109 less than Forty-two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$42,500.00)
110 plus Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) for each additional child
111 under the age of twenty-one (21).

112 The annual adjusted gross income of the family shall be
113 verified by completion of the Free Application for Federal Student
114 Aid (FAFSA) and the completion of the verification process if the
115 applicant is selected for it.

116 As used in this subsection, the term "family" for an
117 unemancipated applicant means the applicant, the applicant's
118 parents and other children under age twenty-one (21) of the
119 applicant's parents. The term "family" for an emancipated
120 applicant means the applicant, an applicant's spouse, and any
121 children under age twenty-one (21) of the applicant and spouse.



122 (* * *9) No student shall receive a grant under this
123 section in an amount greater than the tuition charged by the
124 school. The student must apply for a federal grant prior to
125 receiving state funds.

126 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-106-29, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
127 amended as follows:

128 37-106-29. (1) There is established the Mississippi
129 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Program, which shall be called
130 "MTAG Works" to signify the state's commitment to strengthening
131 Mississippi's workforce pipeline by providing expanded access to
132 postsecondary education for working adults and part-time students
133 in addition to students matriculating from high school. The grant
134 shall be for college or university freshmen, sophomores, juniors
135 and seniors to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary
136 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section
137 37-106-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, which shall set the dates and
138 deadlines for applying for an award under this section. The board
139 shall establish such rules and regulations as it deems necessary
140 and proper to carry out the purposes and intent of this section.

141 (2) The board shall approve grants to full-time freshmen,
142 sophomore, junior and senior Mississippi residents who meet the
143 general requirements for student eligibility as provided in
144 subsection (4) of this section.

145 (3) * * * MTAG Works grants shall be for Mississippi
146 resident students from any Mississippi family whose prior year



147 adjusted gross income (AGI) * * * does not exceed two hundred
148 percent (200%) of the state's family median income as determined
149 by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The award * * *
150 may be applied to tuition, rooms and meals, books,
151 materials * * *, fees and any other education-related expense, as
152 long as the student's total award package does not exceed the
153 student's cost of attendance as determined by the institution.
154 Award amounts for full-time students shall not be less than * * *
155 Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00) for junior and senior students
156 attending state institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or
157 four-year regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit
158 colleges and universities in Mississippi, and * * * One Thousand
159 Dollars (\$1,000.00) for freshmen and sophomores attending state
160 institutions of higher learning or public community or junior
161 colleges in Mississippi, or regionally accredited, state-approved,
162 nonprofit two-year or four-year colleges in Mississippi * * *.
163 Award amounts for part-time students will be reduced as determined
164 by the board.

165 (4) The general requirements for initial eligibility of
166 students for * * * MTAG Works Grants consist of the following:

167 (a) Member of a Mississippi family whose prior year
168 adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds * * * one hundred percent
169 (100%) of the state's median family income as determined by the
170 Free Application for Federal Student Aid.



171 (b) Acceptance for enrollment at any state institution
172 of higher learning or public community or junior college located
173 in Mississippi, or any regionally accredited, state-approved,
174 nonprofit two-year or four-year college or university located in
175 Mississippi and approved by the board.

176 * * *

177 (* * * c) Any student currently enrolled in any
178 qualified institution shall have to only meet the same
179 requirements as students who are applying for a renewal award.

180 * * *

181 (* * * 5) Eligibility for renewal of * * * MTAG Works grants
182 shall be evaluated at the end of * * * each academic year. As a
183 condition for renewal, a student shall:

184 (a) Make steady academic progress toward a certificate
185 or degree, as outlined in the school Satisfactory Academic
186 Progress Standards and certified by the institution's registrar.

187 * * *

188 (* * * b) Have a cumulative grade point average of at
189 least 2.50 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of each * * *
190 academic year.

191 (* * * 6) Each student, each year, must complete * * * the
192 Free Application for Federal Student Aid * * * to determine his or
193 her eligibility for a * * * MTAG Works grant.

194 (* * * 7) (a) The amount of the * * * MTAG Works grant
195 awarded to any one (1) full-time student shall be determined by



196 the board, but shall not be less than the * * * amount provided in
197 subsection (3) of this section * * *. The amount of the MTAG
198 Works grant awarded to any one (1) student enrolled less than
199 full-time shall be a reduced amount determined by the board.

200 (b) A bonus shall be paid to any MTAG Works recipient
201 who is enrolled as a full-time student in an education program
202 that leads to employment in a high-need or high-demand field as
203 determined by the Mississippi Office of Workforce Development
204 (Accelerate Mississippi). A reduced bonus amount determined by
205 the board shall be paid to any MTAG Works recipient who is
206 enrolled less than full-time in an approved education program that
207 led to employment in a high-need or high-demand field.

208 (* * *c) Payment of the * * * MTAG Works grant shall
209 be made payable to the recipient and the educational institution
210 and * * * delivered directly to the institution * * *.

211 (8) (a) By accepting a MTAG Works grant, the student is
212 attesting that the information provided demonstrates that the
213 student's eligibility is accurate, complete and correct.
214 Falsification of such information shall result in the denial of
215 any pending grant and revocation of any award currently held to
216 the extent that no further payments shall be made by the board on
217 the student's behalf. Any student knowingly making false
218 statements in order to receive a grant shall be guilty of a
219 misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punishable by a
220 fine not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00), or



221 imprisonment up to one (1) year in the county jail, or by both
222 such fine and imprisonment.

223 (b) In addition to any such fine or imprisonment which
224 may be imposed, the court shall order that restitution be made to
225 the board. The measure for restitution in money shall be the
226 current replacement value of the actual monetary benefit received
227 under the MTAG Works Grant Program plus any interest accrued
228 thereon.

229 (9) In order for an institution to remain eligible for its
230 students to participate in the * * * MTAG Works Grant Program, the
231 institution shall comply with the following requirements:

232 (a) A complete and accurate roster of the eligibility
233 status of each awarded student shall be made to the board for each
234 term, semester or quarter of the academic year the student
235 receives a * * * MTAG Works grant.

236 (b) The institution is required to make refunds to
237 the * * * MTAG Works Grant Fund for any funds for which the
238 student is ineligible according to the rules established by the
239 board * * *.

240 (c) * * * The award for an eligible student * * *
241 enrolled for less than full-time status, as defined by the board,
242 will be prorated based on the student's level of enrollment * * *.

243 (d) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any
244 institution participating in the * * * MTAG Works Grant Program.
245 The board may suspend or revoke an institution's eligibility to



246 receive future monies under the program if it finds that the
247 institution has not complied with the provisions of this section.
248 In determining a student's initial eligibility, the number of
249 prior semesters enrolled will not be counted against the student.

250 (10) No student may receive a * * * MTAG Works grant for
251 more than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to
252 complete one (1) baccalaureate degree or one (1) certificate or
253 associate degree program per institution.

254 (11) No student receiving * * * another state grant for
255 undergraduate education shall be eligible to receive the * * *
256 MTAG Works Grant pursuant to this section * * *.

257 For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean, but
258 not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in
259 eligible institutions approved by the board.

260 **SECTION 3.** The board shall determine the annual award and
261 bonus amounts. It is the intention of the Legislature that award
262 amounts for full-time junior and senior students equal
263 approximately twenty percent (20%) to twenty-five percent (25%) of
264 the average tuition of the state's public four-year universities
265 and bonus amounts equal approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of
266 the full-time award. Award amounts for full-time freshmen and
267 sophomore students shall be half of the amount determined by the
268 board to be awarded for juniors and seniors. If funds are
269 insufficient to make full awards to all eligible students, the



270 board shall first withhold or restrict bonuses. The board shall
271 then prorate awards among all eligible students.

272 **SECTION 4.** Initial awards under the MTAG Works Grant Program
273 shall be made first available during the 2024-2025 academic year.

274 **SECTION 5.** Any student who previously received a Mississippi
275 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant, but does not qualify for a MTAG
276 Works Grant, shall continue to receive the Mississippi Resident
277 Tuition Assistance Grant through the 2026-2027 academic year
278 according to the rules and regulations established by the board.

279 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
280 and after July 1, 2023.

