

By: Representative Scoggin

To: Universities and  
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 771  
(As Passed the House)

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; TO  
13 PROVIDE THE MINIMUM STUDENT ENROLLMENT TO BE USED IN DETERMINING  
14 ELIGIBILITY FOR FULL TUITION FOR FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORE STUDENTS;  
15 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

19 37-106-75. (1) The Legislature hereby establishes the  
20 Higher Education Legislative Plan Grant Program.

21 (2) For purposes of this section:

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



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

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

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

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

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

44 \* \* \*

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

48 ( \* \* \* d) Have no criminal record, except for  
49 misdemeanor traffic violations; and



50 \* \* \*

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

60 (5) Award amounts for junior and senior students attending  
61 public four-year universities in the State of Mississippi shall be  
62 equal to tuition and required fees. Award amounts for junior and  
63 senior students attending four-year regionally accredited,  
64 state-approved, nonprofit colleges and universities in the State  
65 of Mississippi shall be equal to the average tuition and required  
66 fees charged by the state's public four-year universities. Award  
67 amounts for freshmen and sophomore students attending public  
68 two-year or four-year colleges and universities in the State of  
69 Mississippi with a total student enrollment of six thousand nine  
70 hundred six (6,906) or less students during the 2022-2023 academic  
71 year shall be equal to tuition and required fees. Award amounts  
72 for freshmen and sophomore students attending public four-year  
73 universities or regionally accredited, state-approved nonprofit  
74 two-year or four-year colleges and universities in the State of



75 Mississippi with a total student enrollment population exceeding  
76 six thousand nine hundred six (6,906) students, shall be equal to  
77 the average tuition and required fees charged by the state's  
78 public two-year colleges.

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

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

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

89 (c) Have a cumulative grade point average of at least  
90 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of the first academic  
91 year and thereafter maintain such a cumulative grade point average  
92 as evaluated at the end of each academic year;

93 (d) Have no criminal record, except for misdemeanor  
94 traffic violations; and

95 (e) Be in financial need.

96 ( \* \* \*7) The provisions of this section shall be  
97 administered by the board. The board may promulgate rules for all  
98 matters necessary for the implementation of this section. By  
99 rule, the board shall provide for:



100 (a) A mechanism for informing all students of the  
101 availability of the assistance provided under this section early  
102 enough in their schooling that a salutary motivational effect is  
103 possible; and

104 (b) Applications, forms, financial audit procedures,  
105 eligibility and other program audit procedures and other matters  
106 related to efficient operation \* \* \*.

107 \* \* \*

108 ( \* \* \*8) An applicant shall be found to be in financial  
109 need if:

110 (a) The family has one (1) child under the age of  
111 twenty-one (21), and the annual adjusted gross income of the  
112 family is less than Forty-two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars  
113 (\$42,500.00); or

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

118 The annual adjusted gross income of the family shall be  
119 verified by completion of the Free Application for Federal Student  
120 Aid (FAFSA) and the completion of the verification process if the  
121 applicant is selected for it.

122 As used in this subsection, the term "family" for an  
123 unemancipated applicant means the applicant, the applicant's  
124 parents and other children under age twenty-one (21) of the



125 applicant's parents. The term "family" for an emancipated  
126 applicant means the applicant, an applicant's spouse, and any  
127 children under age twenty-one (21) of the applicant and spouse.

128 ( \* \* \*9) No student shall receive a grant under this  
129 section in an amount greater than the tuition charged by the  
130 school. The student must apply for a federal grant prior to  
131 receiving state funds.

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

134 37-106-29. (1) There is established the Mississippi  
135 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Program, which shall be called  
136 "MTAG Works" to signify the state's commitment to strengthening  
137 Mississippi's workforce pipeline by providing expanded access to  
138 postsecondary education for working adults and part-time students  
139 in addition to students matriculating from high school. The grant  
140 shall be for college or university freshmen, sophomores, juniors  
141 and seniors to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary  
142 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section  
143 37-106-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, which shall set the dates and  
144 deadlines for applying for an award under this section. The board  
145 shall establish such rules and regulations as it deems necessary  
146 and proper to carry out the purposes and intent of this section.

147 (2) The board shall approve grants to full-time freshmen,  
148 sophomore, junior and senior Mississippi residents who meet the



149 general requirements for student eligibility as provided in  
150 subsection (4) of this section.

151 (3) \* \* \* MTAG Works grants shall be for Mississippi  
152 resident students from any Mississippi family whose prior year  
153 adjusted gross income (AGI) \* \* \* does not exceed one hundred  
154 percent (100%) of the state's family median income as determined  
155 by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The award \* \* \*  
156 may be applied to tuition, rooms and meals, books,  
157 materials \* \* \*, fees and any other education-related expense, as  
158 long as the student's total award package does not exceed the  
159 student's cost of attendance as determined by the institution.  
160 Award amounts for full-time students shall not be less than \* \* \*  
161 Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000.00) for junior and senior students  
162 attending state institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or  
163 four-year regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit  
164 colleges and universities in Mississippi, and \* \* \* One Thousand  
165 Dollars (\$1,000.00) for freshmen and sophomores attending state  
166 institutions of higher learning or public community or junior  
167 colleges in Mississippi, or regionally accredited, state-approved,  
168 nonprofit two-year or four-year colleges in Mississippi \* \* \*.  
169 Award amounts for part-time students will be reduced as determined  
170 by the board.

171 (4) The general requirements for initial eligibility of  
172 students for \* \* \* MTAG Works Grants consist of the following:



173 (a) Member of a Mississippi family whose prior year  
174 adjusted gross income (AGI) \*\*\* does not exceed one hundred  
175 percent (100%) of the state's median family income as determined  
176 by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

177 (b) Acceptance for enrollment at any state institution  
178 of higher learning or public community or junior college located  
179 in Mississippi, or any regionally accredited, state-approved,  
180 nonprofit two-year or four-year college or university located in  
181 Mississippi and approved by the board.

182 \* \* \*

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

186 \* \* \*

187 ( \* \* \*5) Eligibility for renewal of \* \* \* MTAG Works grants  
188 shall be evaluated at the end of \* \* \* each academic year. As a  
189 condition for renewal, a student shall:

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

193 \* \* \*

194 ( \* \* \*b) Have a cumulative grade point average of at  
195 least 2.50 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of each \* \* \*  
196 academic year.





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

200 ( \* \* \*7) (a) The amount of the \* \* \* MTAG Works grant  
201 awarded to any one (1) full-time student shall be determined by  
202 the board, but shall not be less than the \* \* \* amount provided in  
203 subsection (3) of this section \* \* \*. The amount of the MTAG  
204 Works grant awarded to any one (1) student enrolled less than  
205 full-time shall be a reduced amount determined by the board.

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

214 ( \* \* \*c) Payment of the \* \* \* MTAG Works grant shall  
215 be made payable to the recipient and the educational institution  
216 and \* \* \* delivered directly to the institution \* \* \*.

217 (8) (a) By accepting a MTAG Works grant, the student is  
218 attesting that the information provided demonstrates that the  
219 student's eligibility is accurate, complete and correct.  
220 Falsification of such information shall result in the denial of  
221 any pending grant and revocation of any award currently held to



222 the extent that no further payments shall be made by the board on  
223 the student's behalf. Any student knowingly making false  
224 statements in order to receive a grant shall be guilty of a  
225 misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punishable by a  
226 fine not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00), or  
227 imprisonment up to one (1) year in the county jail, or by both  
228 such fine and imprisonment.

229 (b) In addition to any such fine or imprisonment which  
230 may be imposed, the court shall order that restitution be made to  
231 the board. The measure for restitution in money shall be the  
232 current replacement value of the actual monetary benefit received  
233 under the MTAG Works Grant Program plus any interest accrued  
234 thereon.

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

238 (a) A complete and accurate roster of the eligibility  
239 status of each awarded student shall be made to the board for each  
240 term, semester or quarter of the academic year the student  
241 receives a \* \* \* MTAG Works grant.

242 (b) The institution is required to make refunds to  
243 the \* \* \* MTAG Works Grant Fund for any funds for which the  
244 student is ineligible according to the rules established by the  
245 board \* \* \*.



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

249 (d) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any  
250 institution participating in the \* \* \* MTAG Works Grant Program.  
251 The board may suspend or revoke an institution's eligibility to  
252 receive future monies under the program if it finds that the  
253 institution has not complied with the provisions of this section.  
254 In determining a student's initial eligibility, the number of  
255 prior semesters enrolled will not be counted against the student.

256 (10) No student may receive a \* \* \* MTAG Works grant for  
257 more than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to  
258 complete one (1) baccalaureate degree or one (1) certificate or  
259 associate degree program per institution.

260 (11) No student receiving \* \* \* another state grant for  
261 undergraduate education shall be eligible to receive the \* \* \*  
262 MTAG Works Grant pursuant to this section \* \* \*.

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

266 **SECTION 3.** The board shall determine the annual award and  
267 bonus amounts. It is the intention of the Legislature that award  
268 amounts for full-time junior and senior students equal  
269 approximately twenty percent (20%) to twenty-five percent (25%) of  
270 the average tuition of the state's public four-year universities



271 and bonus amounts equal approximately twenty-five percent (25%) of  
272 the full-time award. Award amounts for full-time freshmen and  
273 sophomore students shall be half of the amount determined by the  
274 board to be awarded for juniors and seniors. If funds are  
275 insufficient to make full awards to all eligible students, the  
276 board shall first withhold or restrict bonuses. The board shall  
277 then prorate awards among all eligible students.

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

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

285 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
286 and after July 1, 2023, and shall stand repealed on June 30, 2023.

