

By: Senator(s) Parks

To: Universities and  
Colleges; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2488

1 AN ACT TO ENACT THE MISSISSIPPI PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP ACT; TO  
 2 REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL  
 3 ASSISTANCE BOARD TO ADMINISTER THE MISSISSIPPI PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP  
 4 PROGRAM FOR RESIDENTS OF THIS STATE SEEKING AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE,  
 5 CERTIFICATE OR DIPLOMA FROM AN ELIGIBLE POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION;  
 6 TO SET THE ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS; TO REQUIRE SCHOLARSHIP  
 7 RECIPIENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN MENTORING AND COMMUNITY SERVICE  
 8 PROGRAMS; TO REQUIRE THE BOARD TO DEVELOP THE SELECTION AND  
 9 RENEWAL CRITERIA FOR STUDENTS AND SHALL HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO WORK  
 10 WITH OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS TO DEVELOP THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS FOR  
 11 DELIVERING THE SCHOLARSHIPS; TO PROVIDE THAT MISSISSIPPI PROMISE  
 12 SCHOLARSHIP AT A MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC TWO YEAR POSTSECONDARY  
 13 INSTITUTION SHALL BE THE COST OF TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES AT THE  
 14 ELIGIBLE POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION ATTENDED LESS ALL OTHER GIFT  
 15 AID; TO REQUIRE THE BOARD, MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,  
 16 MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD AND MISSISSIPPI INSTITUTIONS  
 17 OF HIGHER LEARNING TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO THE LEGISLATURE BY  
 18 RESEARCHING AND ANALYZING DATA CONCERNING THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM  
 19 CREATED UNDER THIS PART, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, STUDENT  
 20 SUCCESS AND SCHOLARSHIP RETENTION; TO PROVIDE THAT THE  
 21 "MISSISSIPPI PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FUND," SHALL BE CREATED  
 22 AS A SPECIAL FUND IN THE STATE TREASURY FROM WHICH THE GRANTS  
 23 AUTHORIZED BY THIS ACT SHALL BE DISBURSED BY THE OFFICE; AND FOR  
 24 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

26 **SECTION 1.** (1) This act shall be known and may be cited as  
 27 the "Mississippi Promise Scholarship Act."

28 (2) As used in this section, the following terms shall have  
 29 the meanings ascribed herein:



30 (a) "Eligible high school" means:  
31 (i) A Mississippi public secondary school; or  
32 (ii) A private secondary school accredited by the  
33 Mississippi Department of Education or a regional accrediting  
34 organization.

35 (b) "Eligible postsecondary institution" means a  
36 postsecondary institution that is (i) a Mississippi community  
37 college, or (ii) a postsecondary institution in Mississippi,  
38 public or private, which develops an eligible postsecondary  
39 program leading to an associate's degree. An eligible  
40 postsecondary institution shall be accredited by an accrediting  
41 organization, which is recognized by the United States Department  
42 of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

43 (c) "Eligible program of study" means, beginning with  
44 the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, a federal Title  
45 IV-eligible curriculum of courses leading to a certificate,  
46 diploma, or associate's degree at an eligible postsecondary  
47 institution. An eligible program of study does not include  
48 courses taken at a four-year postsecondary institution prior to a  
49 student's admission in, or that were taken by a student to fulfill  
50 prerequisite requirements.

51 (d) "Full-time student" means a student who is enrolled  
52 in a minimum of twelve (12) semester hours. "Full-time student"  
53 includes a student with a documented learning disability who  
54 receives accommodations because of the student's disability and



55 who is unable to take twelve (12) semester hours per semester as a  
56 direct result of the student's disability; provided, that the  
57 student takes the maximum number of semester hours that is  
58 established by the eligible postsecondary institution as feasible  
59 for the student to attempt.

60 (e) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the  
61 federal Pell grant, Higher Education Legislative Plan, Mississippi  
62 Tuition Assistance Grant, Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant or  
63 any other public or private financial aid toward tuition and other  
64 higher education expenses.

65 (f) "Mississippi Promise scholarship student" means a  
66 student admitted to and enrolled in an eligible program of study.

67 (3) The Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
68 Assistance Board (the "board") shall administer the Mississippi  
69 Promise scholarship program for residents of this state seeking an  
70 associate's degree, certificate or diploma from an eligible  
71 postsecondary institution under the following terms and  
72 conditions:

73 (a) (i) To be eligible for the scholarship a student  
74 shall be admitted to, and enrolled full-time in, an eligible  
75 postsecondary program in the fall term following:

- 76 1. Graduation from an eligible high school;  
77 2. Completion of high school as a Mississippi  
78 home school student; or



79                   3. Obtaining a GED or HiSET diploma;  
80 provided, that the student obtains the GED or HiSET diploma prior  
81 to the student reaching nineteen (19) years of age.

82                   (ii) Exceptions to initial enrollment may be made  
83 for extenuating circumstances as provided in rules promulgated by  
84 the board; and

85                   (iii) Notwithstanding subparagraph (3)(a), if a  
86 student who graduates early from an eligible high school, or who  
87 completes high school at an eligible home school early, or who  
88 obtains a GED or HiSET diploma before the spring semester  
89 immediately preceding the student's initial fall enrollment, and  
90 the student is admitted to, and enrolled full-time in, an eligible  
91 postsecondary program, then the student is eligible for the  
92 scholarship;

93                   (b) Students applying for the scholarship shall  
94 complete the Mississippi Promise scholarship application for their  
95 initial year of enrollment in accordance with the schedule  
96 determined by the board. Students shall complete the free  
97 application for federal student aid (FAFSA) each academic year in  
98 which they seek to receive the Mississippi Promise scholarship;

99                   (c) To continue to receive a Mississippi Promise  
100 scholarship at an eligible two-year or four-year postsecondary  
101 institution, a student shall maintain a minimum cumulative grade  
102 point average of 2.0 as set forth in the rules promulgated by the  
103 board;



104           (d) Scholarship recipients shall participate in  
105 mentoring and community service programs under the rules  
106 promulgated by the board. The board shall develop the selection  
107 and renewal criteria for students and shall have the authority to  
108 work with outside organizations to develop the most effective  
109 means for delivering the scholarships. In selecting outside  
110 organizations for participation in the Mississippi Promise  
111 scholarship program, the board shall give preference to locally  
112 established entities that meet designated standards specified by  
113 the program's promulgated rules;

114           (e) A Mississippi Promise scholarship at a Mississippi  
115 public two-year postsecondary institution shall be the cost of  
116 tuition and mandatory fees at the eligible postsecondary  
117 institution attended less all other gift aid. Gift aid shall be  
118 credited first to the student's tuition and mandatory fees;

119           (f) Notwithstanding subparagraph (3)(e), the amount of  
120 the Mississippi Promise scholarship at an eligible four-year  
121 public postsecondary institution or an eligible private  
122 institution shall be the average cost of tuition and mandatory  
123 fees at the public two-year postsecondary institutions less all  
124 other gift aid. Gift aid shall be credited first to the average  
125 tuition and mandatory fees as described in subdivision (c)(5);

126           (g) A Mississippi Promise scholarship student who has  
127 an approved medical or personal leave of absence from an eligible  
128 postsecondary institution may continue to receive the scholarship



129 upon resuming the student's education at an eligible postsecondary  
130 institution so long as the student continues to meet all  
131 applicable eligibility requirements. The sum of all approved  
132 leaves of absence shall not exceed six (6) months, except as  
133 provided for in rules promulgated by the Board;

134 (h) (i) A student shall be eligible for the Mississippi  
135 Promise scholarship until the occurrence of the first of the  
136 following events:

137 1. The student has earned a certificate,  
138 diploma or associate's degree; or

139 2. The student has attended an eligible  
140 postsecondary institution as a Mississippi Promise scholarship  
141 student for five (5) semesters if the institution is on a semester  
142 system, or its equivalent if the institution is on a system other  
143 than a semester system. Such semester limit shall not include an  
144 approved leave of absence;

145 (ii) A student with a documented learning  
146 disability shall be eligible for the Mississippi Promise  
147 scholarship until the occurrence of the first of the following  
148 events:

149 1. The student has earned a certificate,  
150 diploma or associate's degree; or

151 2. The student has attended an eligible  
152 postsecondary institution as a Mississippi Promise scholarship  
153 student for the minimum number of semesters the eligible



154 postsecondary institution establishes as feasible for the student  
155 to complete the course work for the certificate, diploma, or  
156 associate's degree the student is attempting to obtain, if the  
157 institution is on a semester system, or its equivalent if the  
158 institution is on a system other than a semester system. Such  
159 semester limit shall not include an approved leave of absence;

160 (i) To be eligible for a Mississippi Promise  
161 scholarship, a student shall maintain continuous enrollment as a  
162 full-time student in each semester while receiving the  
163 scholarship;

164 (j) The requirement of subparagraph (3)(i) that a  
165 Mississippi Promise scholarship student maintain continuous  
166 enrollment does not apply to a Mississippi Promise scholarship  
167 student who is on a medical or personal leave, as approved by the  
168 student's eligible postsecondary institution; and

169 (k) Notwithstanding the requirement of subparagraph  
170 (3)(a) and (3)(i) that a Mississippi Promise scholarship student  
171 maintain full-time enrollment, a student who does not have a  
172 documented learning disability may enroll in fewer than twelve  
173 (12) semester hours if required by the academic program in which  
174 the student is enrolled. A student with a documented learning  
175 disability shall enroll each semester in the maximum number of  
176 semester hours that is established by the eligible postsecondary  
177 institution as feasible for the student to attempt.



178           (4) The board is authorized to promulgate rules to establish  
179 deadlines for applications, and appeal procedures for the denial  
180 or revocation of the scholarship, and to otherwise effectuate the  
181 purposes of this part.

182           (5) The board, Mississippi Department of Education,  
183 Mississippi Community College Board and Mississippi Institutions  
184 of Higher Learning shall provide assistance to the Legislature by  
185 researching and analyzing data concerning the scholarship program  
186 created under this part, including, but not limited to, student  
187 success and scholarship retention. The board shall publish its  
188 findings in its annual report.

189           (6) There is created a special fund in the State Treasury to  
190 be known as the "Mississippi Promise Scholarship Program Fund,"  
191 from which the grants authorized by this act shall be disbursed by  
192 the office. All monies shall be disbursed from the fund in  
193 compliance with the guidelines, guidance, rules, regulations and  
194 other criteria, as may be amended from time to time, by the United  
195 States Department of the Treasury regarding the use of monies from  
196 the American Rescue Plan Act. Unexpended amounts of any monies  
197 remaining in the fund at the end of the fiscal year shall not  
198 lapse into the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund or the State  
199 General Fund, and any interest earned on amounts in the fund shall  
200 remain in the fund.

201           (7) This act shall stand repealed on July 1, 2027.





202           **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
203 and after its passage.

