

By: Representatives Johnson, Hines, Harness, Porter, Clark To: Workforce Development

HOUSE BILL NO. 548

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE THAT THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
2 EMPLOYMENT SECURITY, THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS
3 OF HIGHER LEARNING, THE MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD AND
4 THE STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD TO WORK JOINTLY TO DEVELOP A
5 PLAN TO BE KNOWN AS THE "CAREER PATHWAYS INITIATIVE"; TO REQUIRE
6 THE INITIATIVE TO INCREASE THE ACCESS OF LOW-INCOME PARENTS AND
7 OTHER INDIVIDUALS TO EDUCATION CREDENTIALS THAT QUALIFY THEM FOR
8 HIGHER-PAYING JOBS IN THEIR LOCAL AREAS, IMPROVE THE PREPAREDNESS
9 OF THE MISSISSIPPI WORKFORCE FOR HIGH-SKILL AND HIGH-WAGE JOBS,
10 DEVELOP TRAINING COURSES AND EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS AFTER
11 CONSULTING LOCAL EMPLOYERS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS TO IDENTIFY
12 APPROPRIATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDED SKILLS AND TRAINING TO
13 MEET EMPLOYERS' NEEDS, PROVIDE RESOURCES ON THE BASIS OF
14 PERFORMANCE INCENTIVES, INCLUDING PARTICIPANTS ENROLLING IN
15 COURSES, COMPLETING THE COURSES, OBTAINING JOBS IN THE TARGETED
16 JOB CATEGORIES, AND STAYING EMPLOYED IN THE TARGETED JOB
17 CATEGORIES; TO REQUIRE THE INITIATIVE TO USE AVAILABLE TEMPORARY
18 ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) FUNDS FOR PARTICIPANTS WHO
19 HAVE CUSTODY OR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR A CHILD UNDER TWENTY-ONE
20 YEARS OF AGE AND WHOSE FAMILY INCOME IS LESS THAN TWO HUNDRED
21 FIFTY PERCENT OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL; TO REQUIRE THE BOARD
22 OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING TO CONTRACT
23 FOR THE PROVIDING OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING THAT WILL RESULT IN
24 JOB TRAINING CERTIFICATES OR HIGHER EDUCATION DEGREES FOR
25 LOW-INCOME ADULTS WITH STATE AGENCIES, TWO-YEAR COLLEGES, LOCAL
26 GOVERNMENTS OR PRIVATE OR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS; TO AUTHORIZE
27 TANF FUNDS TO BE COMBINED WITH OTHER FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL
28 FUNDS IN WAYS CONSISTENT WITH FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS IN
29 ORDER TO PROVIDE MORE FUNDING FOR THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND
30 FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

32 SECTION 1. (1) The Legislature finds that:



33 (a) Higher education credentials are:
34 (i) Becoming increasingly important for the State
35 of Mississippi to maintain a competitive workforce; and
36 (ii) Critical for adults to qualify and obtain
37 high-wage employment; and
38 (b) It is in the public interest that:
39 (i) Individuals improve their education
40 credentials in order to qualify for higher-wage jobs;
41 (ii) Eligible persons have access to postsecondary
42 education programs that meet the specific needs of working adults;
43 (iii) Institutions of higher education offer
44 programs targeted to the specific workforce needs of their area
45 within the state; and
46 (iv) Our state provides services aimed at
47 improving employment prospects for low-income adults.
48 (2) (a) (i) The Mississippi Department of Employment
49 Security, the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
50 Learning, the Mississippi Community College Board and the State
51 Workforce Investment Board shall work jointly to develop a plan to
52 be known as the "Career Pathways Initiative."
53 (ii) The plan must be updated annually.
54 (b) The initiative must:
55 (i) Increase the access of low-income parents and
56 other individuals to education credentials that qualify them for
57 higher-paying jobs in their local areas;



58 (ii) Improve the preparedness of the Mississippi
59 workforce for high-skill and high-wage jobs;

60 (iii) Develop training courses and educational
61 credentials after consulting local employers and local workforce
62 boards to identify appropriate job opportunities and needed skills
63 and training to meet employers' needs;

64 (iv) Provide resources on the basis of performance
65 incentives, including participants:

- 66 1. Enrolling in courses;
- 67 2. Completing the courses;
- 68 3. Obtaining jobs in the targeted job
69 categories; and
- 70 4. Staying employed in the targeted job
71 categories; and

72 (v) Use available Temporary Assistance for Needy
73 Families (TANF) funds for participants who have custody or legal
74 responsibility for a child under twenty-one (21) years of age and
75 whose family income is less than two hundred fifty percent (250%)
76 of the federal poverty level.

77 (3) The initiative plan is subject to review, recommendation
78 and approval by the State Workforce Investment Board.

79 (4) Under the initiative, the Board of Trustees of State
80 Institutions of Higher Learning shall contract to provide
81 education and training that will result in job training



82 certificates or higher education degrees for low-income adults
83 with:

84 (a) State agencies;

85 (b) Two-year colleges;

86 (c) Local governments; or

87 (d) Private or community organizations.

88 (5) (a) The initiative plan must specify procedures and
89 requirements for applications for entry into programs under
90 subsection (4) of this section.

91 (b) Applications must be made to the Board of Trustees
92 of State Institutions of Higher Learning.

93 (6) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
94 Learning shall determine which two-year college proposals are
95 funded under the initiative.

96 (7) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds may
97 be combined with other federal, state and local funds in ways
98 consistent with federal laws and regulations in order to provide
99 more funding for the provisions of this section.

100 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
101 and after July 1, 2024.

