

By: Representatives Gibbs (72nd), Holloway
(76th), Nelson, Bell (65th), Butler-
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To: Universities and
Colleges

HOUSE BILL NO. 1057

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM ANNUAL AWARD UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI EMINENT
3 SCHOLARS GRANT PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

5 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
6 amended as follows:

7 37-106-31. (1) There is created a Mississippi Eminent
8 Scholars Grant Program, to be administered by the Mississippi
9 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board established
10 under Section 37-106-9. The board shall set the dates that will
11 serve as the deadlines for applying for an award under this
12 section and award scholarships to each Mississippi student who:

13 (a) (i) Is recognized by the merit or achievement
14 programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation or the
15 National Achievement Scholarship as a semifinalist or finalist,
16 and has obtained a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5
17 calculated on a 4.0 scale in high school subjects acceptable for
18 credit toward a diploma, after seven (7) semesters certified by



19 the high school counselor or other authorized school official on
20 the application, and graduation from high school verified by the
21 institution before disbursement of award; or

22 (ii) Has scored twenty-nine (29) on the American
23 College Testing Program or its equivalent and has obtained a
24 minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 calculated on a 4.0
25 scale after seven (7) semesters certified by the high school
26 counselor or other authorized school official on the application
27 and graduation from high school verified by the institution before
28 disbursement of award, or the equivalent in high school subjects
29 acceptable for credit toward a diploma; or

30 (iii) Has attended a home education program during
31 grade levels 9 through 12 and has scored twenty-nine (29) on the
32 American College Testing Program or its equivalent.

33 (b) Meets the general requirements for student
34 eligibility, except as otherwise provided in this section.

35 (c) Files, before the deadline, an application for an
36 award during his last year in high school, or before the
37 expiration of the third school year succeeding the year of his
38 high school graduation.

39 (d) Attends, on a full-time basis, any state
40 institution of higher learning or public community or junior
41 college, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit
42 two-year or four-year college or university located in the State
43 of Mississippi approved by the board.



44 (e) Enrolls as a "first-time in college" student in
45 Mississippi. Postsecondary academic credit earned prior to or
46 during the summer immediately subsequent to receiving a high
47 school diploma, or while dually enrolled in secondary and
48 postsecondary educational institutions, or while enrolled in the
49 early admission program of a postsecondary institution shall not
50 be considered when determining if a student is enrolling for the
51 first time. However, any student who earns postsecondary academic
52 credit at an institution of higher learning located outside the
53 state shall meet the requirements on grade point average and
54 maximum credit hours set forth in subsection (2)(b) of this
55 section.

56 (f) Is a resident of the State of Mississippi.

57 (2) (a) Except for students who earn credits at
58 institutions of higher learning located outside the state,
59 students who apply for awards but do not accept their initial
60 awards may apply to receive awards during subsequent application
61 periods occurring before the expiration of the third school year
62 succeeding the year of their high school graduation. The
63 eligibility of these applicants shall be determined in the same
64 manner as first-time applicants.

65 (b) Students who receive initial awards and who later
66 do not accept renewal awards may apply to receive awards during
67 subsequent application periods occurring before the expiration of
68 the third school year succeeding the year of their high school



69 graduation. Reinstatement applications will be accepted from
70 these students according to dates set by the Mississippi
71 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board. The
72 eligibility of these applicants shall be determined in the same
73 manner as first-time applicants, except that these students shall
74 be required to have maintained the equivalent of a 3.5 cumulative
75 grade point average on a 4.0 scale for all college work attempted,
76 and if the student attended an out-of-state institution, to have
77 completed no more than thirty-six (36) credit hours. The board
78 shall not make awards to reinstatement applicants who submit
79 applications that are received after the deadline set by the
80 Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

81 (c) The board shall create a renewal application for
82 each student who received the award for one or more terms during
83 the immediately preceding academic year.

84 (3) (a) The annual award to a student shall be up to * * *
85 Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) for tuition and fees. Payment
86 of the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant shall be made payable to
87 the recipient and the educational institution and mailed directly
88 to the institution, to be applied first to tuition.

89 (b) Within six (6) weeks of the end of regular
90 registration, inclusive of a drop-add period, institutions shall
91 certify to the board the eligibility status of each awarded
92 student. The eligibility status of each student to receive a
93 disbursement shall be determined by each institution as of this



94 date. Institutions shall not be required to reevaluate a
95 student's eligibility status after this date for purposes of
96 amending eligibility determinations previously made. However, an
97 institution shall be requested to make refunds for students who
98 receive award disbursements and terminate enrollment for any
99 reason during the academic term when an institution's refund
100 policies permit a student to receive a refund under the
101 circumstances.

102 (c) Institutions shall certify to the board the amount
103 of funds disbursed to each student and shall remit to the board
104 any undisbursed advances within sixty (60) days of the end of
105 regular registration.

106 (4) A recipient shall maintain the equivalent of a 3.5
107 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or shall maintain
108 an approved equivalent student progress evaluation plan, on at
109 least twelve (12) hours per quarter, trimester or semester in
110 order to be eligible for a continuation of the award. No student
111 may receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant for more than the
112 equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one (1)
113 degree or certificate program per institution. The award may be
114 renewed annually upon certification of eligibility by the eligible
115 institutions that the recipient meets the necessary
116 qualifications. If any recipient transfers from one university,
117 community college or junior college to another, his award will be
118 transferable, provided he is otherwise eligible for the award. If



119 a student fails to maintain continuous enrollment, and is not
120 granted an exception for cause by the administering board, the
121 student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
122 Grant during the following semester or trimester or term of the
123 regular academic year.

124 (5) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any
125 institution participating in the Mississippi Eminent Scholars
126 Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an institution's
127 eligibility to receive future monies under the program if it finds
128 that the institution has not complied with the provisions of this
129 section.

130 (6) For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean,
131 but not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in
132 eligible institutions approved by the board.

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

