

By: Representative Bell (21st)

To: Workforce Development;
Appropriations E

HOUSE BILL NO. 11

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI CAREER AND TECHNICAL
2 EDUCATION EMPLOYABILITY (MISSCATEE) PROGRAM, WHICH SHALL BE
3 DIRECTED BY THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF
4 PROVIDING TUITION-FREE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ATTENDANCE FOR ELIGIBLE
5 RECIPIENTS FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) AND TRAINING
6 LEADING TO ASSOCIATE DEGREE CREDENTIALS OR INDUSTRY CERTIFICATIONS
7 IN HIGH-WAGE, HIGH-DEMAND INDUSTRIES WITH DOCUMENTED WORKFORCE
8 SHORTAGES PRIORITIZED BY THE OFFICE; TO PROVIDE FOR DEFINITIONS;
9 TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (ACCELERATE
10 MS) SHALL SERVE AS FISCAL AGENT IN ADMINISTERING THE FUNDS; TO
11 PRESCRIBE THE REQUIREMENTS TO ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY AND TO REMAIN
12 ELIGIBLE FOR THE RECEIPT OF PROGRAM FUNDS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE
13 RECIPIENT OF A GRANT SHALL COMMIT TO SERVING IN THE INDUSTRY
14 SECTOR FOR WHICH HIS DEGREE CREDENTIAL OR INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION
15 WAS GRANTED FOR SUCH A PERIOD OF TIME IN THE STATE AS DETERMINED
16 BY THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT; TO PROVIDE THE REPORTING
17 REQUIREMENTS; TO PROVIDE FOR THE RECOUPING OF FUNDS BY THE OFFICER
18 OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FROM ANY RECIPIENT WHO FAILS TO ADHERE TO
19 HIS OR HER AGREEMENT REGARDING COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAM OR WORK
20 AND RESIDENCY COMMITMENT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

22 SECTION 1. This act shall be known and cited as the
23 "Mississippi Connecting Career and Technical Education
24 Employability (MissCATEE) Program."

25 SECTION 2. (1) The Legislature finds that establishing
26 attainable workforce goals reflect Mississippi's commitment to
27 creating a pipeline of skilled workers to address workforce

shortages and build a sustainable economic future begins with investing in career and technical education (CTE) programs that meet the needs of employers and communities. Mississippi's workforce development goals center around equipping its citizens with the skills necessary to meet the demands of high-growth, high-demand industries. These goals, include the following:

34 (a) Expanded career and technical education (CTE)

35 opportunities, which:

36 (i) Increase access to CTE programs at community
37 colleges to prepare students for technical and skilled trade
38 careers;

39 (ii) Focus on industry-recognized certifications
40 and associate degrees aligned with state workforce needs; and

41 (iii) Promote dual-enrollment opportunities for
42 high school students to participate in CTE pathways;

43 (b) Align education and training with emphasis on

44 Mississippi's workforce development sector strategies targeting
45 industries with workforce shortages. High-priority sectors
46 include:

47 (i) Advanced manufacturing: addressing the
48 growing need for skilled machinists, engineers and technicians;

49 (ii) Healthcare: expanding the pipeline for
50 nurses, allied health professionals and paramedics;

51 (iii) Information technology: preparing workers
52 for roles in cybersecurity, software development and IT support



53 (iv) Transportation and logistics: training
54 workers for commercial driving, warehousing and supply chain
55 management; and

56 (v) Energy and construction: focusing on renewable
57 energy technologies, traditional utilities and skilled trades like
58 electricians and plumbers;

59 (c) Address workforce shortages in rural areas to:

60 (i) Prioritize investments in CTE programs to
61 serve underserved rural communities where skilled labor gaps are
62 most acute; and

63 (ii) Develop programs to retain graduates within
64 the state, with special incentives for those who commit to working
65 in rural areas;

66 (d) Promote lifelong learning and upskilling that:

67 (i) Encourage adults aged eighteen (18) and older
68 to re-enter the workforce or enhance their skills through CTE
69 programs; and

70 (ii) Provide pathways for individuals without
71 postsecondary education to earn certifications or degrees,
72 fostering upward economic mobility:

73 (e) Support economic resilience through public-private
74 partnerships by:

75 (i) Collaborating with industries to identify
76 workforce needs and design CTE curricula that address specific
77 skill gaps; and



78 (ii) Incentivizing employers to participate in
79 apprenticeship programs, internships and on-the-job training for
80 students;

81 (f) Increase access to funding and support services
82 that:

83 (i) Offer financial aid programs, like
84 tuition-free grants or scholarships, to eliminate barriers to CTE
85 participation; and

86 (ii) Provide wraparound support services such as
87 childcare, transportation and academic counseling to ensure
88 student success; and

89 (g) Focus on data-driven workforce solutions that:

90 (i) Use labor market data to identify emerging
91 industries and predict workforce needs; and

92 (ii) Regularly update sector strategies and CTE
93 offerings to reflect changes in Mississippi's economic landscape.

94 (2) Therefore, the intent of the Legislature is:

95 (a) To provide funding to the Office of Workforce
96 Development to establish a scholarship program for the purposes
97 outlined herein.

98 (b) To provide tuition-free access to community
99 colleges with accredited CTE programs that are aligned with
100 Mississippi's workforce sector strategies, as identified by
101 Accelerate MS, which result in a degree credential or industry



102 certification in an identified industry sector, ensuring a
103 pipeline of skilled workers to meet the state's economic demands.

104 (c) To gauge the effectiveness of this program by
105 gathering data related to the participation and employment
106 outcomes in order to replicate successful efforts in future
107 workforce development programs.

108 **SECTION 3.** (1) There is established the Mississippi
109 Connecting Career and Technical Education Employability
110 (MissCATEE) Program, which shall be directed by the Office of
111 Workforce Development (Accelerate MS) for the purpose of providing
112 tuition-free community college attendance for eligible recipients
113 for career and technical education (CTE) and training for
114 associate degree credential or industry certification in
115 high-wage, high-demand industries with documented workforce
116 shortages prioritized by the office. This program shall be
117 subject to the availability of funds appropriated by the
118 Legislature.

119 (2) As used in this section, the following words and phrases
120 shall have the meanings as defined herein unless the context
121 clearly indicates otherwise:

122 (a) "Accelerate MS" or "office" means the Office of
123 Workforce Development.

124 (b) "Eligible institution" means any community college,
125 local workforce development area or other eligible recipient of
126 funding under this section.

127 (c) "Eligible program" means a career and technical
128 (CTE) program administered at an eligible institution and approved
129 by the Office of Workforce Development (Accelerate MS), which is
130 aligned with identified workforce sector strategies.

131 (d) "Eligible recipient" means a person who:

132 (i) Has been a resident of Mississippi for at
133 least one (1) year prior to enrollment in an eligible program at
134 an eligible institution and continues to physically reside herein;
135 (ii) Is a United States citizen, lawful permanent
136 resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations for
137 student aid eligibility;

142 (vi) Has completed a Free Application for Federal
143 Student Aid (FAFSA);

144 (vii) Maintains satisfactory academic progress as
145 defined by the administering institution upon enrollment;
146 (viii) Has not previously earned an associate or
147 bachelor's degree; and

148 (ix) Agrees to remain in the State of Mississippi
149 and work in the industry sector in which the degree credential or
150 industry certification was earned for such a period of time as



151 prescribed by policies promulgated by the Office of Workforce
152 Development for each sector strategy.

153 (e) "High-wage, high-demand industry" means those
154 industries paying above Mississippi's median annual income and
155 prioritized by the office across the eight (8) workforce
156 ecosystems.

157 (f) "Sector strategy" means the workforce
158 needs of an industry within a regional labor market that has been
159 collaboratively identified by a partnership of employers within a
160 critical industry that brings together education, economic
161 development, workforce systems and community organizations to
162 collaboratively provide job-readiness training (including
163 professional skills development), occupational skills training and
164 support services.

165 (3) The Office of Workforce Development shall serve as
166 fiscal agent in administering the funds, and shall disburse
167 appropriate funds to eligible institutions on a semester basis
168 upon receipt of verification of eligible recipients' enrollment in
169 an eligible program.

170 (4) Subject to appropriation by the Legislature, allocations
171 to eligible recipients shall be awarded to the eligible
172 institution of enrollment by the office through an application
173 process.

174 (5) The office shall:

(a) Inform each recipient of the amount his or her portion of the program funds available for use, dependent on enrollment as a full-time or part-time student; and

(b) Develop regulations and procedures to govern the administration of the program.

(7) The office may use a minimal amount of funds allocated for this section for the administration of the program, to be approved by the State Workforce Investment Board Executive Committee.

SECTION 4. The office shall enter into a contract agreement with each eligible recipient of funds under the program that incorporates the following obligations and conditions:

(a) The recipient of funds shall commit to working in the industry sector which correlates to his or her earned degree credential or industry certification within the State of Mississippi such a period of time as prescribed by policies promulgated by the Office of Workforce Development for each sector strategy;

(b) If any recipient of program funds does not engage in working in the industry sector which correlates to his or her earned degree credential or industry certification in accordance with the terms of this act, the recipient shall be obligated to repay all amounts received, together with interest thereon at the maximum rate allowed by Mississippi law or the federal discount rate plus five percent (5%) per year, whichever is less, the



200 interest to accrue from the date that each payment of funds was
201 received by the recipient;

202 (c) No interest shall accrue and there shall be no
203 obligation to repay the principal sums accrued during any one (1)
204 period of time that the recipient involuntarily serves on active
205 duty in the United States Armed Forces; and

206 (d) Repayment of the principal with interest shall be
207 due and payable in full immediately on the occurrence of either of
208 the following events:

209 (i) Failure to remain in the State of Mississippi
210 for such a period of time as prescribed by policies promulgated by
211 the Office of Workforce Development for each sector strategy for
212 any reason other than temporary personal illness; or

213 (ii) Failure to work in the industry sector which
214 correlates to his or her earned degree credential or industry
215 certification on a regularly sustained basis as provided in the
216 eligibility requirements of Section 3 of this act.

217 **SECTION 5.** The Office of Workforce Development shall submit
218 an annual report on the program to the Governor, the Lieutenant
219 Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Chair
220 of the House Workforce Development Committee, the Chair of the
221 Senate Economic and Workforce Development Committee and the
222 Chairperson of the House and Senate Universities and Colleges
223 Committees. The report shall contain a detailed explanation of
224 how the funds appropriated for the program were awarded and how

225 many students have participated in the grant program and their
226 employment outcomes.

227 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
228 and after July 1, 2025.

