

By: Representative Johnson

To: Public Health and Human
Services; Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 215

1 AN ACT TO CREATE A HAZARD PAY FOR ESSENTIAL HEALTH CARE
2 WORKERS GRANT PROGRAM, TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT
3 OF HEALTH, TO PROVIDE \$1,500 IN PREMIUM PAY FOR ESSENTIAL HEALTH
4 CARE WORKERS WHO PERFORM JOBS IN PUBLIC SETTINGS AT HEIGHTENED
5 RISK OF EXPOSURE TO COVID-19; TO DEFINE CERTAIN TERMS; TO REQUIRE
6 THE DEPARTMENT TO ESTABLISH A PROCEDURE FOR EMPLOYERS OF ESSENTIAL
7 HEALTH CARE WORKERS TO APPLY FOR GRANT FUNDS; TO REQUIRE THE
8 DEPARTMENT TO SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PROGRAM TO THE
9 LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMITTEE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

11 **SECTION 1.** (1) The State Department of Health shall
12 establish a Hazard Pay for Essential Health Care Workers Grant
13 Program to provide premium pay of One Thousand Five Hundred
14 Dollars (\$1,500.00) to essential health care workers who perform
15 jobs in public settings that require exposure to COVID-19. Under
16 the program, an essential work employer may apply for a grant from
17 the department to award premium pay to eligible employees using
18 any funds available to the department which are not prohibited by
19 law from being expended for such purposes.



(2) As used in this act, the following words and phrases have the meanings ascribed in this subsection unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

(a) "Department" means the State Department of Health.

(b) "Essential health care worker" means a licensed social worker, clinical worker, certified nurse assistant, aide, technician, janitorial staff, housekeeping staff, security guard, food service worker, laundry worker, nonmanagerial administrative staff or any other employee in a health care setting who performs work in a job or environment that subjects the employee to an elevated risk of being exposed to, directly or indirectly, or contracting COVID-19.

(c) "Essential work" means any work that:

(i) Is not performed while teleworking from a residence; and

(ii) 1. Involves regular in-person interactions with patients, the public or coworkers of the individual performing the work; or

2. Involves regular physical handling of items that were handled by, or are to be handled by, patients, the public or coworkers of the individual performing the work.

(d) "Essential work employer" means an employer who employs, or provides remuneration for services or labor to an essential health care worker.



44 (e) "Program" means the Hazard Pay for Essential Health
45 Care Workers Grant Program.

46 (3) To qualify for premium pay, an essential health care
47 worker must have an annual income of Seventy-five Thousand Dollars
48 (\$75,000.00) or less and must perform essential work.

49 (4) The department shall administer the grant program and
50 review grant applications from essential work employers. As soon
51 as practicable after July 1, 2025, the department shall promulgate
52 rules and regulations establishing a process and deadlines for
53 receiving grant applications and determining whether or not the
54 requirements for approval of the application are met.

55 Applications must be reviewed, and the department must make a
56 determination that a request for a grant is eligible under the
57 program. If an essential work employer is eligible to receive
58 funds, a grant agreement must be executed not more than seven (7)
59 days after approval is granted with respect to that employer.
60 Upon execution of the agreement, the department shall allocate the
61 funding to the employer. All awards must be determined at the
62 discretion of the executive director of the department.

63 (5) Grant funds must be used prospectively: grants may not
64 be used to cover the costs associated with any payment of hazard
65 pay made to essential health care workers before July 1, 2025.

66 (6) Before October 1 of each year, the department shall
67 submit to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee an annual report
68 about the program. The report must contain, at a minimum, the



69 applications received and the amount of grant funds awarded to
70 each applicant.

71 (7) This section shall stand repealed on July 1, 2028.

72 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
73 and after July 1, 2025.

