

By: Representative Scott

To: Education;
Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 310

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY PATHWAYS THROUGH
2 EDUCATION (HOPE) PROGRAM, WHICH SHALL BE ADMINISTERED BY THE STATE
3 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; TO PROVIDE THAT THE GOAL OF THE HOPE
4 PROGRAM IS TO DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM TO RE-ENROLL HIGH
5 SCHOOL DROPOUTS IN PROGRAMS THAT WILL ENABLE THEM TO EARN THEIR
6 HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA; TO PROVIDE THAT THE HOPE PROGRAM SHALL AWARD
7 GRANTS TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ASSIST IN ESTABLISHING INSTRUCTIONAL
8 PROGRAMS AND OTHER SERVICES DESIGNED TO RE-ENROLL HIGH SCHOOL
9 DROPOUTS; TO REQUIRE A STUDENT IN THE HOPE PROGRAM WHO WISHES TO
10 EARN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA TO MEET THE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS OF
11 THE STUDENT'S DISTRICT OF RESIDENCE; TO PROVIDE THAT IN ORDER TO
12 BE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING, A SCHOOL DISTRICT MUST DEVELOP A HOPE
13 PLAN APPROVED BY THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; TO PROVIDE THAT A
14 SCHOOL DISTRICT MAY OPERATE ITS OWN PROGRAM OR ENTER INTO A
15 CONTRACT WITH OTHER NOT-FOR-PROFIT ENTITIES TO OPERATE A PROGRAM;
16 TO PROVIDE THAT HOPE PROGRAM FUNDING MUST BE DISTRIBUTED BASED
17 UPON THE PROPORTION OF DROPOUTS IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO THE
18 TOTAL NUMBER OF DROPOUTS IN THIS STATE; TO PROVIDE THAT A SCHOOL
19 DISTRICT MAY RECEIVE ADEQUATE EDUCATION PROGRAM FUNDS FOR STUDENTS
20 ENROLLED IN A HOPE PROGRAM IF CERTAIN CRITERIA ARE MET; TO SPECIFY
21 CATEGORIES OF PROGRAMMING IN THE HOPE PROGRAM; TO SPECIFY THE
22 MINIMUM COMPONENTS FOR PROGRAMS TO BE FUNDED THROUGH THE HOPE
23 PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

25 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is established the Hope and
26 Opportunity Pathways through Education (HOPE) Program. The State
27 Department of Education shall implement and administer the HOPE
28 Program. The goal of the HOPE Program is to develop a



29 comprehensive system in this state to re-enroll significant
30 numbers of high school dropouts in programs that will enable them
31 to earn their high school diploma.

32 (2) Through the HOPE Program, the State Department of
33 Education shall award grants, subject to appropriation for this
34 purpose, to school districts to assist in establishing
35 instructional programs and other services designed to
36 re-enroll high school dropouts.

37 The HOPE Program may provide incentive grant funds for a
38 school district to develop partnerships with other school
39 districts, public community colleges and community groups to build
40 comprehensive plans to re-enroll high school dropouts in their
41 regions or districts.

42 Programs funded through the HOPE Program must allow high
43 school dropouts, up to and including persons twenty-one (21) years
44 of age, to re-enroll in an educational program in conformance with
45 rules adopted by the State Board of Education. Programs may
46 include, without limitation, comprehensive year-round programming,
47 evening school, summer school, community college courses, adult
48 education, vocational training, work experience, programs to
49 enhance self-concept and parenting courses. Any student in the
50 HOPE Program who wishes to earn a high school diploma must meet
51 the prerequisites to receiving a high school diploma and any other
52 graduation requirements of the student's school district of
53 residence. Any student who successfully completes the



requirements for his or her graduation must be awarded a diploma identifying the student as graduating from his or her school district of residence.

(3) In order to be eligible for funding under the HOPE Program, a school district must develop a HOPE Plan to be approved by the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education shall develop rules for the HOPE Program which set forth the requirements for the development of the HOPE Plan. Each plan must involve school districts, public community colleges and key community programs that work with high school dropouts. No HOPE Program funds may be distributed to a school district until the State Board of Education approves the plan.

(4) A school district may operate its own program funded by the HOPE Program or enter into a contract for the operation of the program by other not-for-profit entities, including other school districts, public community colleges and not-for-profit community-based organizations.

A school district that receives a HOPE grant from the State Department of Education may provide funds under a sub-grant, as specified in the HOPE Plan, to other not-for-profit entities to provide services according to the HOPE Plan that was developed. These other entities may include other school districts, public community colleges, not-for-profit community-based organizations or a cooperative partnership among these entities.



78 (5) In order to ensure the delivery of programs that will
79 have the greatest impact, HOPE Program funding must be distributed
80 based upon the proportion of dropouts in the school district to
81 the total number of dropouts in this state. This formula must
82 employ the dropout data provided by school districts to the State
83 Board of Education.

84 A school district may include those students enrolled in a
85 program funded by the HOPE Program in the district's average daily
86 attendance under the adequate education program if the State Board
87 of Education has approved the HOPE Plan and the students are
88 receiving services that are meeting the requirements for receipt
89 of a high school diploma and otherwise are eligible to be included
90 in the district's average daily attendance for adequate education
91 program funding.

92 (6) Categories of programming in the HOPE Program may
93 include the following:

94 (a) Full-time programs that are comprehensive,
95 year-round programs;

96 (b) Part-time programs combining work and study
97 scheduled at various times which are flexible to the needs of
98 students;

99 (c) Online programs and courses in which students take
100 courses and complete on-site, supervised tests that measure each
101 student's mastery of a specific course needed for graduation.

102 Students may take courses online and earn credit, or students may



103 prepare to take supervised tests for specific courses for credit
104 leading to receipt of a high school diploma; and

105 (d) Dual enrollment in which students attend high
106 school classes in combination with community college classes or
107 students attend community college classes while simultaneously
108 earning high school credit and eventually a high school diploma.

109 (7) In order to have successful comprehensive programs
110 re-enrolling and graduating low-skilled high school dropouts,
111 programs funded through the HOPE Program must include all of the
112 following components:

113 (a) Small programs, ideally seventy (70) to one hundred
114 (100) students, at a separate school site with a distinct
115 identity. Programs may be larger with specific need and
116 justification, keeping in mind that it is crucial to keep programs
117 small to be effective;

118 (b) Specific performance-based goals and outcomes and
119 measures of enrollment, attendance, skills, credits, graduation,
120 and the transition to college, training and employment;

121 (c) Strong, experienced leadership and teaching staff
122 who are provided with ongoing professional development;

123 (d) Voluntary enrollment;

124 (e) High standards for student learning, integrating
125 work experience, and education, including during the school year
126 and after school, and summer school programs that link
127 internships, work and learning;



(f) Comprehensive programs providing extensive support services;

(g) Small teams of students supported by full-time paid mentors who work to retain and help those students graduate;

(h) A comprehensive technology learning center with Internet access and broad-based curriculum focusing on academic and career subject areas; and

(i) Learning opportunities that incorporate action into study.

(8) Programs funded through the HOPE Program must report data to the State Board of Education as requested. This information may include, but is not limited to, student enrollment figures, attendance information, course completion data, graduation information and post-graduation information, as available.

(9) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations setting forth the funding distribution process to school districts, the planning and the conditions upon which a HOPE Plan will be approved by the board, and other rules and regulations as necessary to develop the HOPE Program.

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

