

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



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

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

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

71 A school district that receives a HOPE grant from the State  
72 Department of Education may provide funds under a sub-grant, as  
73 specified in the HOPE Plan, to other not-for-profit entities to  
74 provide services according to the HOPE Plan that was developed.  
75 These other entities may include other school districts, public  
76 community colleges, not-for-profit community-based organizations  
77 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;



128 (f) Comprehensive programs providing extensive support  
129 services;

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

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

135 (i) Learning opportunities that incorporate action into  
136 study.

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

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

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

