

By: Representative Scott

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 377

1       AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO  
2 ESTABLISH THE "MISSISSIPPI SENIOR CADETS PROGRAM"; TO REQUIRE THE  
3 PROGRAM TO BE AIMED AT REDUCING POOR ACADEMIC SCORES AND HIGH  
4 DROP-OUT RATES THROUGHOUT THE STATE; TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT  
5 TO CREATE RULES AND REGULATIONS TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; TO  
6 ESTABLISH MINIMUM GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE  
7 PROGRAM; TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-29, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
8 CONFORM TO THE PRECEDING PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED  
9 PURPOSES.

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

11       SECTION 1. (1) The State Department of Education shall  
12 establish the "Mississippi Senior Cadets Program" aimed at  
13 reducing the disproportionately poor academic scores and high  
14 drop-out rates throughout the state by encouraging high school  
15 seniors to mentor kindergarten through eighth grade students in  
16 their respective school districts.

17       (2) The department shall create rules and regulations  
18 necessary for the proper administration of the program and  
19 guidelines for school districts and mentors.

20       (3) A student participating in this program shall:  
21               (a) Mentor at least five (5) hours a week;

22 (b) Work with the school principal and teachers for at  
23 least two (2) hours a month with planning and implementing the  
24 mentor program; and

25 (c) Maintain at least a "C" average or higher in his or  
26 her senior school coursework.

27 (4) Senior high school students who successfully fulfill the  
28 requirements of the program as designed by the department shall be  
29 given:

30 (a) Preference for scholarship grants provided to  
31 Mississippi residents by the Postsecondary Education Financial  
32 Assistance Board and the state institutions of higher learning;

33 (b) Three (3) hours of elective credit to satisfy high  
34 school graduation requirements; and

35 (c) Three (3) hours of college credit to a public  
36 Mississippi college or university.

37           **SECTION 2.** Section 37-106-29, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
38       amended as follows:

39                   37-106-29. (1) There is established the Mississippi  
40 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Program for college or  
41 university freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors to be  
42 administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
43 Assistance Board established under Section 37-106-9, Mississippi  
44 Code of 1972, which shall set the dates and deadlines for applying  
45 for an award under this section. The board shall establish such

46 rules and regulations as it deems necessary and proper to carry  
47 out the purposes and intent of this section.

48 (2) The board shall approve grants to full-time freshmen,  
49 sophomore, junior and senior Mississippi residents who meet the  
50 general requirements for student eligibility as provided in  
51 subsection (4) of this section and Section 1 of this act.

52 (3) Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants shall be  
53 for Mississippi resident students from any Mississippi family  
54 whose prior year adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds the maximum  
55 allowed to qualify for full Pell Grant eligibility and  
56 campus-based federal aid. Those Mississippi students qualifying  
57 for less than the full Pell Grant award shall receive a  
58 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant in an amount not to  
59 exceed the maximum Pell Grant allowable for that individual  
60 student. The award shall be applied to tuition, rooms and meals,  
61 books, materials and fees not to exceed One Thousand Dollars  
62 (\$1,000.00) for junior and senior students attending state  
63 institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or four-year  
64 regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit colleges and  
65 universities in Mississippi, and Five Hundred Dollars (\$500.00)  
66 for freshmen and sophomores attending state institutions of higher  
67 learning or public community or junior colleges in Mississippi, or  
68 regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit two-year or  
69 four-year colleges in Mississippi, which will be prorated per  
70 term, semester or quarter of the academic year for costs of



71 attendance, calculated according to the formula specified in  
72 subsection (8) of this section.

73 (4) The general requirements for initial eligibility of  
74 students for Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants  
75 consist of the following:

76 (a) Member of a Mississippi family whose prior year  
77 adjusted gross income (AGI) exceeds the maximum allowed to qualify  
78 for Pell Grant eligibility and campus-based federal aid.

79 (b) Acceptance for enrollment at any state institution  
80 of higher learning or public community or junior college located  
81 in Mississippi, or any regionally accredited, state-approved,  
82 nonprofit two-year or four-year college or university located in  
83 Mississippi and approved by the board.

84 (c) Completion of a secondary education as follows:

85 (i) Graduation from high school verified by the  
86 institution before disbursement of award with a minimum grade  
87 point average of 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale after seven (7)  
88 semesters as certified by the high school counselor or other  
89 authorized school official on the application; or

90 (ii) Attendance at a home education program during  
91 grade levels 9 through 12; or

92 (iii) Satisfactory completion of the High School  
93 Equivalency Diploma; or

94 (iv) Successful completion of the International  
95 Baccalaureate Program.



96 (d) A minimum score of fifteen (15) on the ACT test  
97 except that any student entering a vocational or technical program  
98 of study, or who has satisfactorily completed the High School  
99 Equivalency Diploma Test and attends a community or junior college  
100 will not be required to have a test score under the ACT unless a  
101 student enrolls in courses of academic study.

102 (e) Any student currently enrolled in any qualified  
103 institution shall have to only meet the same requirements as  
104 students who are applying for a renewal award.

105 (5) By accepting a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance  
106 Grant, the student is attesting to the accuracy, completeness and  
107 correctness of information provided to demonstrate the student's  
108 eligibility. Falsification of such information shall result in  
109 the denial of any pending grant and revocation of any award  
110 currently held to the extent that no further payments shall be  
111 made. Any student knowingly making false statements in order to  
112 receive a grant shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable, upon  
113 conviction thereof, by a fine of up to Ten Thousand Dollars  
114 (\$10,000.00), a prison sentence of up to one (1) year in the  
115 county jail, or both, and shall be required to return all  
116 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants wrongfully  
117 obtained.

118 (6) Eligibility for renewal of Mississippi Resident Tuition  
119 Assistance Grants shall be evaluated at the end of each semester,



120 or term, of each academic year. As a condition for renewal, a  
121 student shall:

122 (a) Make steady academic progress toward a certificate  
123 or degree, as outlined in the school Satisfactory Academic  
124 Progress Standards and certified by the institution's registrar.

125 (b) Maintain continuous enrollment for not less than  
126 two (2) semesters or three (3) quarters in each successive  
127 academic year, unless granted an exception for cause by the  
128 administering board; examples of cause may include student  
129 participation in a cooperative program, internship program or  
130 foreign study program. If a student fails to maintain continuous  
131 enrollment, and is not granted an exception for cause by the  
132 administering board, the student is ineligible to receive the  
133 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant during the following  
134 semester or trimester or term of the regular academic year.

135 (c) Have a cumulative grade point average of at least  
136 2.50 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of each semester or  
137 trimester or term.

138 (7) Each student, each year, must complete a Free  
139 Application for Federal Student Aid form or a Statement of  
140 Certification as designed by the administering board to determine  
141 his/her eligibility for a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance  
142 Grant.

143 (8) (a) The amount of the Mississippi Resident Tuition  
144 Assistance Grant awarded to any one (1) student, up to the maximum

145 amount provided in subsection (3) of this section, shall be the  
146 difference of the student's cost of attendance at his accredited  
147 college of choice and the amount of federal aid such student may  
148 receive, not to supplant but to supplement the amount of any  
149 federal aid awarded to the student. Cost of attendance is the  
150 tuition and fees of the applicable institution plus an allowance  
151 for room and meals and books and materials.

152 (b) Payment of the Mississippi Resident Tuition  
153 Assistance Grant shall be made payable to the recipient and the  
154 educational institution and mailed directly to the institution, to  
155 be applied first to tuition.

156 (9) In order for an institution to remain eligible for its  
157 students to participate in the Mississippi Resident Tuition  
158 Assistance Grant Program, the institution shall comply with the  
159 following requirements:

160 (a) A complete and accurate roster of the eligibility  
161 status of each awarded student shall be made to the board for each  
162 term, semester or quarter of the academic year the student  
163 receives a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant.

164 (b) The institution is required to make refunds to the  
165 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Fund for any funds  
166 which have not been disbursed to the recipient, in the case of  
167 students who have received a grant but who terminate enrollment  
168 during the academic term, semester or quarter of the academic year  
169 if an institution's refund policies permit a student to receive a



170 refund in such instance. The recipient shall be responsible for  
171 the refund of any funds which have been disbursed by the  
172 institution in such instance.

173 (c) If a student drops below full-time status but does  
174 not terminate all enrollment during the term, semester or quarter  
175 of the academic year no refund will be required for that term.  
176 However, that student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi  
177 Resident Tuition Assistance Grant during the following term,  
178 semester or quarter of the regular academic year.

179 (d) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any  
180 institution participating in the Mississippi Resident Tuition  
181 Assistance Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an  
182 institution's eligibility to receive future monies under the  
183 program if it finds that the institution has not complied with the  
184 provisions of this section. In determining a student's initial  
185 eligibility, the number of prior semesters enrolled will not be  
186 counted against the student.

187 (10) No student may receive a Mississippi Resident Tuition  
188 Assistance Grant for more than the equivalent semesters or  
189 quarters required to complete one (1) baccalaureate degree or one  
190 (1) certificate or associate degree program per institution.

191 (11) No student receiving a Mississippi Eminent Scholars  
192 Grant as provided in Section 37-106-31 shall be eligible to  
193 receive the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant pursuant  
194 to this section unless he is eligible for such award after the



195 Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant has been considered by the  
196 board when conducting an assessment of the financial resources  
197 available to the student. In no case shall any student receive  
198 any combination of student financial aid that would exceed the  
199 cost of attendance, as defined in subsection (8) (a).

200 For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean, but  
201 not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in  
202 eligible institutions approved by the board.

203 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
204 and after July 1, 2025.

