

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;



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

(c) Completion of a secondary education as follows:

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

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

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

(iv) Successful completion of the International 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,



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

(11) No student receiving a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant as provided in Section 37-106-31 shall be eligible to receive the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant pursuant 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.

