

By: Representative Scoggins

To: Education;
Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 1247

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-71, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO TRANSITION THE "MISSISSIPPI DYSLEXIA EDUCATION FORGIVABLE LOAN
3 PROGRAM" TO A LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE
4 MISSISSIPPI POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD; TO
5 PROVIDE THAT ELIGIBILITY IS LIMITED TO STUDENTS WHO HAVE GRADUATED
6 WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE IN DYSLEXIA THERAPY FROM AN ACCREDITED
7 INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING APPROVED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF
8 EDUCATION; TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS AS WELL AS
9 REQUIREMENTS FOR FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT AS A LICENSED DYSLEXIA
10 THERAPIST PROVIDING DYSLEXIA INSTRUCTION OR CLINICAL SERVICE IN A
11 PUBLIC SCHOOL OR CHARTER SCHOOL, SCHOOL DISTRICT, OR NONPUBLIC
12 SCHOOL APPROVED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; TO REQUIRE
13 RECIPIENTS TO HAVE AN OUTSTANDING QUALIFYING EDUCATIONAL LOAN
14 RECEIVED PRIOR AND NOT IN DEFAULT OR DELINQUENT ON ANY EXISTING
15 EDUCATIONAL LOAN; TO PROVIDE THE AWARDS SHALL BE ISSUED ON A
16 FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS, AND SHALL BE CAPPED AT \$6,000.00
17 PER YEAR FOR EACH YEAR OF EMPLOYMENT UP TO A MAXIMUM OF THREE
18 YEARS, TO PRESCRIBE ADDITIONAL CRITERIA REQUIRED BY THE
19 MISSISSIPPI POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD FOR
20 ADMINISTRATION OF THE LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED
21 PURPOSES.

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

23 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-71, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
24 amended as follows:

25 37-106-71. (1) There is established the Mississippi
26 Dyslexia Education * * * Loan Repayment Program for the purpose of
27 identifying and recruiting qualified university and college * * *

28 graduates from the state for * * * service in the schools
29 providing dyslexia therapy.

30 (2) The receipt of a * * * loan repayment award under the
31 program shall be solely limited to those students who * * * have
32 graduated with a master's degree * * * in dyslexia therapy * * *
33 from any accredited public or private institution of higher
34 learning * * * approved by the State Department of Education, which
35 provides instructional training as required under Chapter 173,
36 Title 37, Mississippi Code of 1972, for dyslexia therapy
37 preparation for AA licensure by the department.

38 (3) * * * Subject to the availability of funds, an eligible
39 applicant for an initial award must have:

40 (a) Legal residency in the State of Mississippi
41 (b) Grained full-time employment providing
42 instructional or clinical services as a licensed dyslexia
43 therapist in a public school district in the state or an eligible
44 nonpublic school, as defined by Section 37-173-1, and meets the
45 criteria established in Section 37-173-17, not to exceed five (5)
46 recipients providing instructional or clinical services in a
47 nonpublic school at any time;

48 (c) A current relevant Mississippi educator's license
49 with the appropriate dyslexia therapy designation; and

50 (d) Outstanding qualifying educational loans, received
51 at any point during the recipient's postsecondary education year,
52 which may include the principal, interest and related expenses



53 such as the required interest premium on the unpaid balances of
54 government and commercial loans obtained by the recipient for
55 undergraduate educational expense.

56 (4) * * * Persons who have received funds from other
57 forgivable loan programs established for teachers under
58 Mississippi law, or who are presently in default or delinquent on
59 any federal, state, local or commercial qualifying educational
60 loan, shall not be eligible for this program.

61 (5) * * * Recipients in the program shall be selected on a
62 first-come, first-served basis from all eligible applicants. The
63 Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board
64 shall renew eligible applicants approved in prior years only if
65 the renewal applicant continues to meet the standards set forth in
66 this section, and the renewal applicant has not received full
67 funding provided by subsection (6).

68 (6) * * * Awards may be a maximum of Six Thousand Dollars
69 (\$6,000.00) for each year of employment up to a period of three
70 (3) years.

71 (7) * * * A recipient shall not be penalized for ending
72 employment at a public or charter school or district in the State
73 of Mississippi if the recipient begins working as a dyslexia
74 therapist for another public or charter school or district in the
75 State of Mississippi during the year on which the award is based.

76 (8) Awards shall be granted on a year-to-year basis, and
77 recipients have no obligation to seek a subsequent award.



78 (9) Awards shall be paid annually after the expiration of
79 the year of employment for which the award was granted to the
80 recipient's lender or loan service provider, to be applied to the
81 outstanding balance. Monies paid by the recipient or on the
82 recipient's behalf toward qualifying educational loans before
83 payment of the award shall not be eligible for reimbursement
84 through the program.

85 (10) During the employment year for which the award is
86 granted, a recipient shall at all times keep the Mississippi
87 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board informed of any
88 changes to the recipient's current, correct and complete
89 employment status.

90 (11) Recipients who fail to maintain a Mississippi
91 professional standard educator's license or fail to fulfill the
92 year of employment on which the award was based shall forfeit any
93 right to the award.

94 (12) The Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
95 Assistance Board, in collaboration with the State Board of
96 Education, shall track award recipients under this program through
97 their third employment year, unless the recipient leaves
98 employment at a public or charter school or district in the state
99 at an earlier date. Data collected shall include recipients'
100 place of employment and any other pertinent information necessary
101 to determine the efficacy of the program in retaining licensed
102 dyslexia therapists in the State of Mississippi.



103 (13) The Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
104 Assistance Board shall promulgate regulations necessary for the
105 proper administration of this section, including establishing a
106 fiscal year policy for the program, and application dates and
107 deadlines.

108 (* * *¹⁴) Funding for the establishment and continued
109 operation of the Mississippi Dyslexia Education * * * Loan
110 Repayment Program shall be administered by the board through a
111 special fund established within the Critical Needs Teacher
112 Forgivable Loan Program. The board may accept and receive
113 monetary gifts and donations from any source, public or private,
114 which such funds shall be deposited in the special fund for the
115 benefit of the Mississippi Dyslexia Education * * * Loan Repayment
116 Program with the Critical Needs Teacher Forgivable Loan Program.

117 (* * * 15) No more than twenty (20) students per cohort
118 shall be selected annually to be admitted into the program for
119 receipt of * * * loan repayment awards. * * *

120 (* * * 16) As part of the Mississippi Dyslexia
121 Education * * * Loan Repayment Program, the State Department of
122 Education is authorized and directed, subject to the availability
123 of funds specifically appropriated therefor by the Legislature, to
124 provide financial assistance for the recruitment, placement and
125 employment of qualified licensed dyslexia therapy professionals
126 identified under Section 37-173-15(1) (b), Mississippi Code of
127 1972, in order to provide dyslexia screening, evaluation and



128 therapy services to the students attending school in the school
129 district. Said funding may be used to purchase curriculum
130 materials and supplies for dyslexia therapy services. Said
131 funding shall be provided to public school districts upon
132 application therefor regardless of the financial need of the
133 school district in an amount not to exceed Fifty Thousand Dollars
134 (\$50,000.00) annually, and subject to specific appropriation
135 therefor by the Legislature. In order to qualify for such funds,
136 the school district shall meet the following criteria:

137 (a) Use licensed dyslexia therapists or individuals
138 participating in an approved training program resulting in State
139 Department of Education licensure to provide dyslexia therapy to
140 students diagnosed with dyslexia;

141 (b) Use daily Orton-Gillingham-based therapy;

142 (c) Have school leadership trained in dyslexia; and

143 (d) Have a current School Program Verification and

144 Assurances form on file with the State Department of Education,
145 Office of Curriculum and Instruction. Procedures and standards
146 for the application for such funds shall be established by
147 regulations developed and issued by the State Board of Education.

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

