

By: Representative Currie

To: Judiciary A

## HOUSE BILL NO. 1416

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE "MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES  
2 REFORM ACT"; TO REFORM STATE-SUPPORTED POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL  
3 INSTITUTIONS BY PROHIBITING FUNDING FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND  
4 INCLUSION OFFICES AND OFFICERS; TO PROHIBIT MANDATORY DEI TRAINING  
5 AND DIVERSITY STATEMENTS IN ADMISSIONS, HIRING, AND PROMOTIONS; TO  
6 MANDATE MERIT-BASED DECISIONS FOR ADMISSIONS AND EMPLOYMENT; TO  
7 AUTHORIZE THE REALLOCATION OF DEI FUNDING TO SCHOLARSHIPS AND  
8 TUITION REDUCTION; TO REQUIRE ANNUAL COMPLIANCE REPORTING BY  
9 UNIVERSITIES; TO ESTABLISH ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS THROUGH CIVIL  
10 AND LEGAL ACTIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

12 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the  
13 "Mississippi Public Universities Reform Act."

14 **SECTION 2.** The purpose of this act is to promote  
15 intellectual diversity, uphold academic freedom, and ensure equal  
16 opportunity within Mississippi's public universities by:

- 17 (a) Abolishing diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)  
18 bureaucracies;
- 19 (2) Ending mandatory diversity training;
- 20 (3) Curtailing political coercion; and
- 21 (4) Ending identity-based preferences in admissions and  
22 hiring.



**SECTION 3.**

As used in this act, the following terms shall have the meanings herein ascribed, unless context of use clearly requires otherwise:

(a) "Diversity, equity, and inclusion" or "DEI" refers to:

(i) Any effort to manipulate or otherwise influence the composition of the faculty or student body with reference to race, sex, color or ethnicity, apart from ensuring colorblind and sex-neutral admissions and hiring in accordance with state and federal anti-discrimination laws;

(ii) Any effort to promote differential treatment of or provide special benefits to individuals on the basis of race, color or ethnicity;

(iii) Any effort to promote or promulgate policies and procedures designed and/or implemented with reference to race, color or ethnicity;

(iv) Any effort to promote or promulgate trainings, programming, or activities designed and/or implemented with reference to race, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation; and

(v) Any effort to promote as the official position of the administration, the college, the university or any administrative unit thereof, a particular, widely contested opinion referencing unconscious or implicit bias, cultural appropriation, allyship, transgender ideology, microaggressions,



group marginalization, anti-racism, systemic oppression, social justice, intersectionality, nem-pronouns, heteronormativity, disparate impact, gender theory, racial or sexual privilege or any related formulation of these concepts.

(b) "Public university or college" refers to any state-supported postsecondary educational institutions under the purview of the Board of Trustees of the State Institutions of Higher Learning or the Mississippi Community College Board.

(c) "Diversity, equity and inclusion office" or "DEI office" refers to any division, office, center or other unit of a public university or college or component thereof which is responsible for creating, developing, designing, implementing, organizing, planning, or promoting policies, programming, training, practices, activities and procedures relating to diversity, equity and inclusion. A DEI office does not include:

(i) An office staffed exclusively by licensed attorneys, except for paralegal and secretarial support, and certified by the Attorney General of the State of Mississippi as operating with the sole and exclusive mission of ensuring legal compliance with the public university or college's obligations under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as amended, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, applicable court order or other applicable state and federal law;



(ii) An academic department defined as a unit of a public university or college that exists primarily for the purpose of offering courses for degree credit and that does not establish policy or procedures to which other units of the public university or college are subject;

(iii) An office solely engaged in new student recruitment; or

(iv) A registered student organization.

(d) "Diversity, equity and inclusion officer" or "DEI officer" refers to a full or part-time employee of a public university or college or a component thereof or an independent contractor of a public university or college whose duties include coordinating, creating, developing, designing, implementing, organizing, planning or promoting policies, programming, training, practices, activities and procedures relating to DEI.

The term does not refer to:

(i) A licensed attorney employed or contracted with a public university or college to ensure compliance with the public university or college's obligations under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as amended, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, applicable court order or other applicable state and federal law;

(ii) Any faculty member while engaged in teaching, research, and the production of creative works, the dissemination



of their research and creative works or advising a registered student organization; or

(iii) A guest speaker or performer with a short-term engagement.

(e) "Diversity training" refers to a training, seminar, discussion group, workshop or other instructional program, whether provided in-person, online or by any other means, with a purpose of advising, counseling, demonstrating, explaining, instructing or teaching participants about diversity, equity and inclusion.

Diversity training does not include an academic course offered for credit or activities of a registered student organization affecting only its members.

(f) "Diversity statement" refers to any written or oral statement discussing:

(i) The applicant or candidate's race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation;

(ii) The applicant or candidate's views on, experience with, or contributions to DEI, marginalized groups, anti-racism, social justice, intersectionality, confessing one's race-based privilege or related concepts;

(iii) The applicant or candidate's views on or experience with the race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation of students and co-workers; or

(iv) The applicant or candidate's views regarding any theory or practice that advocates for the differential



treatment of any individual or groups of individuals based on race, sex, color, gender, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation.

**SECTION 4.** (1) No public university or college in the State of Mississippi shall spend appropriated funds or any funds derived from bequests, charges, deposits, donations, endowments, fees, grants, gifts, income, receipts, tuition or any other source, to establish, sustain, support or staff a DEI office or to contract, employ, engage or hire an individual to serve as a DEI officer. Nothing in this section shall be construed to cover or affect a public education's funding of the following:

- (a) Academic course instruction;
- (b) Research and creative works by a public university or college's students, faculty or other research personnel, and the dissemination thereof;
- (c) Activities of registered student organizations;
- (d) Arrangements for guest speakers and performers with short-term engagements; or
- (e) Mental or physical health services provided by licensed professionals.

(2) Any funds that would otherwise have been spent on DEI offices or DEI officers in fiscal year 2025 may be reallocated, at the discretion of the governing board of public university or college, to merit scholarships for lower- and middle-income students, and to reduce tuition for in-state students.



(3) None of the funds appropriated by this act for fiscal year 2026 may be spent by a public university or college until its governing board has filed a report with the Board of Trustees of the State Institutions of Higher Learning and the Mississippi Community College Board, which discloses:

(a) The steps taken to comply with this section by the governing board and its staff, the administration, staff and faculty of the public university or college under the board's governance;

(b) The number and job titles of the individuals deemed to be required by the public university or college's obligations to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, as amended, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, applicable court order or other applicable state and federal law; and

(c) Certifies that the public university or college under the board's governance are fully compliant with this section. The public university or college shall also make such report available for the public on its website.

**SECTION 5.** (1) No public university or college in the State of Mississippi may require mandatory diversity training of any kind for students, employees or applicants for employment. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to:



172 (a) A requirement, the nonfulfillment of which, may  
173 adversely affect the status, salary or benefits of an employee or  
174 applicant for employment at the public university or college or  
175 component thereof;

176 (b) A requirement to participate in any administrative  
177 process or decision-making body of the public university or  
178 college, such as a hiring committee;

179 (c) A requirement to participate in any otherwise  
180 available program sponsored by the public university or college or  
181 component thereof;

182 (d) A requirement to receive any generally available  
183 benefit offered by the public university or college or component  
184 thereof;

185 (e) A requirement to live in any residential facility  
186 used exclusively for housing or boarding students or faculty; or

187 (f) A requirement for the application or receipt of any  
188 scholarship, loan, grant, financial aid or forgiveness program.

189 (2) No public university or college in the State of  
190 Mississippi shall require or solicit a diversity statement as part  
191 of an admissions process, employment application process, hiring  
192 process, contract renewal process or promotion process or as a  
193 condition of participation in any administrative or  
194 decision-making function of the public university or college.

195 (3) No public university or college in the State of  
196 Mississippi shall grant preferential consideration to an





197 applicant, teacher, employee or student for opinions expressed or  
198 action taken pertaining to another individual or a group of  
199 individuals in which the public university or college's  
200 consideration is based on race, sex, color, ethnicity, gender  
201 identity or sexual orientation of those other individuals.

202       **SECTION 6.** Hiring and admissions decisions at any public  
203 university or college in the State of Mississippi shall be made on  
204 merit. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no public  
205 university or college shall grant preferential consideration to  
206 any applicant for admission or employment on the basis of race,  
207 sex, color, ethnicity or national origin. Nothing in this section  
208 shall be interpreted as prohibiting bona fide qualifications based  
209 on sex which are conducive to the normal operation of a public  
210 university or college.

211       **SECTION 7.** Any person may notify the attorney general of a  
212 violation or potential violation of the "Mississippi Public  
213 Universities Reform Act" by a public university or college. The  
214 Attorney General may file suit for any legal or equitable remedy  
215 the Attorney General deems appropriate.

216       **SECTION 8.** (1) Any student enrolled in a degree program at  
217 a public university or college, any faculty member of a public  
218 university or college, or any alumnus/alumna of a public  
219 university or college may bring an action against that public  
220 university or college if it violates this section.



221 (2) If the claimant shows that the public university or  
222 college violated the "Mississippi Public Universities Reform Act,"  
223 the claimant is entitled to injunctive relief.

224 (3) Notwithstanding any other law, a civil action brought  
225 under this section may be brought in:

226 (a) The county in which all or a substantial part of  
227 the events or omissions giving rise to the claim occurred;

228 (b) The county of residence in this state for any one  
229 (1) of the natural person defendants at the time the cause of  
230 action accrued;

231 (c) The county of the principal office in this state of  
232 any one (1) of the defendants that is not a natural person; or

233 (d) The county of residence for the claimant if the  
234 claimant is a natural person residing in this state.

235 **SECTION 9.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
236 and after July 1, 2025.

