

By: Senator(s) Harden

To: Education;  
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2482

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-159-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
2 TO PROVIDE THAT CRITICAL NEEDS TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS SHALL  
3 AGREE TO TEACH IN A SUBJECT AREA IN WHICH THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF  
4 TEACHERS IN ORDER TO COMPLETE THEIR OBLIGATION AND CONVERT THEIR  
5 LOANS TO INTEREST-FREE SCHOLARSHIPS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

7 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-159-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
8 amended as follows:

9 37-159-3. (1) There is established the "Critical Needs  
10 Teacher Scholarship Program," the purpose of which is to attract  
11 qualified teachers to those subject areas of the curriculum where  
12 there exists a critical shortage of teachers by awarding full  
13 scholarships to persons declaring an intention to serve in the  
14 teaching field who actually render service to the state while  
15 possessing an appropriate teaching license.

16 (2) Any individual who is enrolled in or accepted for  
17 enrollment at a baccalaureate degree-granting institution of  
18 higher learning whose teacher education program is approved by the  
19 State Board of Education or at an accredited, nonprofit community  
20 or junior college in the State of Mississippi and has a passing  
21 score on the Praxis I Basic Skills Test who expresses in writing  
22 an intention to teach in a subject area of the public school  
23 curriculum in which there exists a critical shortage of teachers,  
24 as designated by the State Board of Education, shall be eligible  
25 for a financial scholarship to be applied toward the costs of the  
26 individual's college education. The annual amount of the award  
27 shall be equal to the total cost for tuition, room and meals,  
28 books, materials and fees at the college or university in which



29 the student is enrolled, not to exceed an amount equal to the  
30 highest total cost of tuition, room and meals, books, materials  
31 and fees assessed by a state institution of higher learning during  
32 that school year. Awards made to nonresidents of the state shall  
33 not include any amount assessed by the college or university for  
34 out-of-state tuition.

35 (3) Awards granted under the Critical Needs Teacher  
36 Scholarship Program shall be available to both full-time and  
37 part-time students. Students enrolling on a full-time basis may  
38 receive a maximum of four (4) annual awards. The maximum number  
39 of awards that may be made to students attending school on a  
40 part-time basis, and the maximum time period for part-time  
41 students to complete the number of academic hours necessary to  
42 obtain a baccalaureate degree in education, shall be established  
43 by rules and regulations jointly promulgated by the Board of  
44 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and the State  
45 Board of Education. Critical Needs Teacher Scholarships shall not  
46 be based upon an applicant's eligibility for financial aid.

47 (4) Except in those cases where employment positions may not  
48 be available upon completion of licensure requirements, at the  
49 beginning of the first school year in which a recipient of a  
50 Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship is eligible for employment as a  
51 licensed teacher or a nontraditional teacher intern pursuant to  
52 Section 37-3-2 (6) (b), that person shall begin to render service  
53 as a licensed teacher or nontraditional teacher intern in a public  
54 school district teaching in a subject area of the curriculum where  
55 there is a critical shortage of teachers, as approved by the State  
56 Board of Education. Any person who received four (4) annual  
57 awards, or the equivalent of four (4) annual awards, shall render  
58 three (3) years' service as a licensed teacher or nontraditional  
59 teacher intern, as the case may be. Any person who received fewer  
60 than four (4) annual awards, or the equivalent of four (4) annual  
61 awards, shall render one (1) year's service as a licensed teacher



62 or nontraditional teacher intern, as the case may be, for each  
63 year that the person received a full-time student scholarship, or  
64 for the number of academic hours equivalent to one (1) school  
65 year, as determined by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions  
66 of Higher Learning, which a part-time student received a  
67 scholarship.

68 (5) Any person failing to complete a program of study which  
69 will enable that person to become a licensed teacher or  
70 nontraditional teacher intern under Section 37-3-2 (6)(b), as the  
71 case may be, shall become liable immediately to the Board of  
72 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning for the sum of  
73 all Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship awards made to that person,  
74 plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate at the  
75 time the person abrogates his participation in the program. Any  
76 person failing to complete his teaching obligation, as required  
77 under subsection (4) of this section, shall become liable  
78 immediately to the board for the sum of all scholarship awards  
79 made to that person less the corresponding amount of any awards  
80 for which service has been rendered, plus interest accruing at the  
81 current Stafford Loan rate at the time the person discontinues his  
82 service, except in the case of a deferral of debt for cause by the  
83 State Board of Education when there is no employment position  
84 immediately available upon a teacher's completion of licensure  
85 requirements. After the period of such deferral, such person  
86 shall begin or resume teaching duties as required under subsection  
87 (4) or shall become liable to the board under this subsection. If  
88 a claim for payment under this subsection is placed in the hands  
89 of an attorney for collection, the obligor shall be liable for an  
90 additional amount equal to a reasonable attorney's fee.

91 (6) The obligations made by the recipient of a Critical  
92 Needs Teacher Scholarship award shall not be voidable by reason of  
93 the age of the student at the time of receiving the scholarship.



94           (7) Any student who, prior to July 1, 2003, had been  
95 accepted into the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program under  
96 the authority of Section 37-159-3(4), as said statute existed  
97 prior to July 1, 2003, shall be allowed to remain in the scholar  
98 loan program, and conversion shall continue to be based on one (1)  
99 semester of service in either (a) a geographic area of the state  
100 in which there exists a critical shortage of teachers as  
101 determined by the State Board of Education, or (b) a subject area  
102 of the curriculum in the public schools in which there exists a  
103 critical shortage of teachers as determined by the State Board of  
104 Education, for each year a loan was received by the student.

105           (8) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
106 Learning and the State Board of Education shall jointly promulgate  
107 rules and regulations necessary for the proper administration of  
108 the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program. The Board of  
109 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall be the  
110 administering agency of the program.

111           (9) If insufficient funds are available to fully fund  
112 scholarship awards to all eligible students, the Board of Trustees  
113 of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall make the awards to  
114 first-time students on a first-come, first-served basis; however,  
115 priority consideration shall be given to persons previously  
116 receiving awards under the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship  
117 Program.

118           (10) All funds received by the Board of Trustees of State  
119 Institutions of Higher Learning from the repayment of scholarship  
120 awards by program participants shall be deposited in the  
121 Mississippi Critical Teacher Shortage Fund.

122           (11) The State Department of Education shall compile and  
123 report, in consultation with the Board of Trustees of State  
124 Institutions of Higher Learning, an annual report with findings  
125 and recommendations to the legislative committees on education by  
126 December 1, 2003, and annually thereafter, on the following:



127                   (a) The number of participants in the Critical Needs  
128 Teacher Scholarship Program, by institution and by freshman,  
129 sophomore, junior and senior level;

130                   (b) The number of nontraditional teacher license  
131 program participants;

132                   (c) The number of individuals who completed the  
133 Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program and the school district  
134 in which they are employed;

135                   (d) The number of individuals who are in default of  
136 their obligation under the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship  
137 Program and the status of their obligation; and

138                   (e) The number of participants in the program who have  
139 successfully completed the Praxis examination in their junior  
140 year.

141                   **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
142 and after July 1, 2003.

