

By: Senator(s) Harden

To: Education;
Appropriations

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 2482

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

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

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

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

20 (2) Any individual who is enrolled in or accepted for
21 enrollment at a teacher education program approved by the State
22 Board of Education at a baccalaureate degree-granting institution
23 of higher learning * * * in the State of Mississippi and has a
24 passing score on the Praxis I Basic Skills Test who expresses in
25 writing an intention to teach in a geographical area of the state
26 or a subject area of the public school curriculum in which there
27 exists a critical shortage of teachers, as designated by the State
28 Board of Education, shall be eligible for a financial scholarship
29 to be applied toward the costs of the individual's college
30 education. The annual amount of the award shall be equal to the



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

38 (3) Awards granted under the Critical Needs Teacher
39 Scholarship Program shall be available to both full-time and
40 part-time students. Students enrolling on a full-time basis may
41 receive a maximum of two (2) annual awards. The maximum number of
42 awards that may be made to students attending school on a
43 part-time basis, and the maximum time period for part-time
44 students to complete the number of academic hours necessary to
45 obtain a baccalaureate degree in education, shall be established
46 by rules and regulations jointly promulgated by the Board of
47 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and the State
48 Board of Education. Critical Needs Teacher Scholarships shall not
49 be based upon an applicant's eligibility for financial aid.

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



63 teacher * * * for each year that the person received a full-time
64 student scholarship * * *.

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

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

91 (7) Any student who, prior to July 1, 2003, has been
92 accepted into the Critical Needs Teacher Scholarship Program under
93 the authority of Section 37-159-3(4) shall be allowed to begin or
94 remain in the scholar loan program, and conversion for those
95 students with fewer than four (4) annual awards shall be based on



96 one (1) year of service in either (a) a geographic area of the
97 state in which there exists a critical shortage of teachers as
98 determined by the State Board of Education, or (b) a subject area
99 of the curriculum in the public schools in which there exists a
100 critical shortage of teachers as determined by the State Board of
101 Education, for each year a loan was received by the student. For
102 those students that receive the equivalent of four (4) annual
103 awards, such students shall render three (3) years of service.

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

