

By: Representative Fleming

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 259

1 AN ACT TO CREATE A TUITION WAIVER PROGRAM FOR PERSONS HAVING
2 A DEBILITATING DISEASE; TO REQUIRE WAIVER APPLICATIONS TO INCLUDE
3 MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION CONCERNING THE APPLICANT'S DEBILITY; TO
4 PROVIDE THAT WAIVERS MAY BE AWARDED TO BOTH FULL-TIME AND
5 PART-TIME STUDENTS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE
6 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING SHALL BE THE ADMINISTERING AGENCY
7 FOR THE PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

9 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is created a tuition waiver program
10 for persons having a debilitating disease. The purpose of the
11 program is to help eligible residents of Mississippi to obtain a
12 postsecondary certificate or degree at a state institution of
13 higher learning or a public community or junior college in
14 Mississippi when such persons, because of their debility,
15 otherwise might not be able to further their education.

16 (2) Any legal resident of the state who has a debilitating
17 disease and who is enrolled in or accepted for enrollment at a
18 state institution of higher learning or a public community or
19 junior college in Mississippi may apply for a tuition waiver under
20 this program. An application must be accompanied by written
21 medical documentation from a licensed physician describing the
22 nature of the applicant's debilitating disease, the estimated
23 extent of the applicant's debility, a prognosis for recovery and
24 any other information that may be required pursuant to rules or
25 regulations established under subsection (6) of this section.

26 (3) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
27 Learning shall establish the maximum annual tuition waiver that
28 may be awarded under the program, which may not exceed the cost of
29 tuition at the institution or college at which the student is

30 enrolled. Both full-time and part-time students may apply for
31 tuition waivers. Students enrolling on a full-time basis may
32 receive a maximum of four (4) annual tuition waivers or, in those
33 instances when a degree program requires five (5) years for
34 completion, five (5) annual tuition waivers. The number of
35 waivers which may be awarded to a student attending school on a
36 part-time basis may not exceed the length of time required to
37 complete the associate or baccalaureate degree or certificate
38 program toward which the student is working. A person who has a
39 baccalaureate degree is not eligible for a tuition waiver, and any
40 person who has an associate degree may receive tuition waivers
41 only in furtherance of a baccalaureate degree.

42 (4) For the purpose of establishing the eligibility of
43 applicants for a tuition waiver, the Board of Trustees of State
44 Institutions of Higher Learning jointly with the State Board for
45 Community and Junior Colleges shall define the term "debilitating
46 disease" and shall establish objective criteria for determining
47 whether an applicant's physical debility qualifies the applicant
48 for a waiver. The definition and criteria shall be included in
49 the rules and regulations established under subsection (6) of this
50 section.

51 (5) As a condition for renewal of a tuition waiver, a
52 student must make steady academic progress toward a certificate or
53 associate or baccalaureate degree, as certified by the
54 institution's registrar, and must maintain a cumulative grade
55 point average of at least 2.00 calculated on a 4.00 scale at the
56 end of each term.

57 (6) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
58 Learning and the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges
59 jointly shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry
60 out the purposes and intent of this section. The Board of
61 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall be the
62 administering agency of the tuition waiver program.

63 (7) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide
64 sufficient funds for tuition waivers for all eligible students
65 under this program. If funds are insufficient to provide tuition
66 waivers for all eligible applicants, the board shall award the
67 waivers to first-time students on a first-come, first-served
68 basis; however, priority consideration must be given to persons
69 previously receiving waivers under the program who are making
70 steady academic progress toward completion of a certificate
71 program or associate or baccalaureate degree.

72 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
73 and after July 1, 2007.