

By: Representatives Dedeaux, Buck, Evans,
Fredericks, Ishee, Janus, Palazzo, Patterson,
Peranich, Simpson, Upshaw

To: Public Health and Human
Services; Universities and
Colleges

HOUSE BILL NO. 475
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY THE
2 BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING FOR
3 FAMILY PROTECTION WORKERS WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
4 HUMAN SERVICES TO OBTAIN THE COLLEGE EDUCATION NECESSARY TO BECOME
5 LICENSED AS SOCIAL WORKERS AND BECOME FAMILY PROTECTION
6 SPECIALISTS FOR THE DEPARTMENT; TO PROVIDE THAT ANY PERSON WHO
7 RECEIVES A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THE PROGRAM, OBTAINS A COLLEGE DEGREE
8 NECESSARY TO BECOME LICENSED AS A SOCIAL WORKER AND RECEIVES SUCH
9 A LICENSE, SHALL RENDER SERVICE AS A FAMILY PROTECTION SPECIALIST
10 FOR THE DEPARTMENT FOR A PERIOD OF NOT LESS THAN THREE YEARS FROM
11 THE DATE THAT THE PERSON BECAME A FAMILY PROTECTION SPECIALIST; TO
12 PROVIDE THAT ANY PERSON WHO RECEIVES A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THE
13 PROGRAM WHO FAILS TO COMPLETE A PROGRAM OF STUDY NECESSARY TO
14 BECOME LICENSED AS A SOCIAL WORKER, AND ANY PERSON WHO RECEIVES A
15 SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THE PROGRAM WHO FAILS TO COMPLETE HIS OR HER
16 SERVICE OBLIGATION AS A FAMILY PROTECTION SPECIALIST FOR THE
17 DEPARTMENT FOR NOT LESS THAN THREE YEARS, SHALL BECOME LIABLE
18 IMMEDIATELY TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES FOR THE SUM OF ALL
19 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS RECEIVED, PLUS INTEREST; AND FOR RELATED
20 PURPOSES.

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

22 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is established a scholarship program
23 to encourage family protection workers employed by the Department
24 of Human Services to obtain the college education necessary to
25 become licensed as a social worker, master social worker or
26 certified social worker and become a family protection specialist
27 for the department.

28 (2) Any person who is employed as a family protection worker
29 for the Department of Human Services shall be eligible for a
30 financial scholarship from the Board of Trustees of State
31 Institutions of Higher Learning, which shall be used to pay the
32 costs of the person's education at a state institution of higher
33 learning in Mississippi to obtain a college degree that is
34 necessary to become licensed as a social worker, master social
35 worker or certified social worker and become a family protection
36 specialist for the department. The annual amount of a scholarship

37 award under the program shall be equal to the total cost of
38 tuition and fees at the college or university in which the student
39 is enrolled, not to exceed an amount equal to the highest total
40 cost of tuition and fees assessed by a state institution of higher
41 learning during that school year.

42 (3) Scholarship awards made under the program shall be
43 available to both full-time and part-time students. Students
44 enrolling on a full-time basis may receive a maximum of two (2)
45 annual awards. The maximum number of scholarship awards that may
46 be made to students attending school on a part-time basis, and the
47 maximum time period for part-time students to complete the number
48 of academic hours necessary to obtain the necessary degree, shall
49 be established by rules and regulations of the Board of Trustees
50 of State Institutions of Higher Learning. Scholarships under the
51 program shall not be based upon an applicant's eligibility for
52 financial aid. A student must maintain a "C" average or higher in
53 his or her college coursework in order to continue receiving the
54 scholarship.

55 (4) After a person who received a scholarship under the
56 program has obtained a college degree that is necessary to become
57 licensed as a social worker, master social worker or certified
58 social worker and has received such a license from the Board of
59 Examiners for Social Workers and Marriage and Family Therapists,
60 the person shall render service as a family protection specialist
61 for the Department of Human Services for a period of not less than
62 three (3) years from the date that the person became a family
63 protection specialist.

64 (5) Any person who receives a scholarship under the program
65 who fails to complete a program of study that is necessary to
66 become licensed as a social worker, master social worker or
67 certified social worker, or who fails to receive such a license
68 from the Board of Examiners for Social Workers and Marriage and
69 Family Therapists, shall become liable immediately to the Board of

70 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning for the sum of
71 all scholarship awards made to that person, plus interest accruing
72 at the current Stafford Loan rate at the time the person
73 discontinues his or her participation in the program. Any person
74 who fails to complete his or her service obligation as a family
75 protection specialist for the Department of Human Services for not
76 less than three (3) years, as required under subsection (4) of
77 this section, shall become liable immediately to the board for the
78 sum of all scholarship awards made to that person, plus interest
79 accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate at the time the person
80 discontinues his or her service. If a claim for payment under
81 this subsection is placed in the hands of an attorney for
82 collection, the obligor shall be liable for an additional amount
83 equal to a reasonable attorney's fee.

84 (6) It is the intent of the Legislature that the pursuit of
85 necessary college education by family protection workers through
86 the scholarship program shall not interfere with the duties of the
87 family protection workers with the Department of Human Services.
88 The department shall promulgate regulations regarding family
89 protection workers who participate in the scholarship program to
90 ensure that such participation does not interfere with their
91 duties with the department.

92 (7) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher
93 Learning shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary for the
94 proper administration of the scholarship program established under
95 this section. The board shall be the administering agency of the
96 program.

97 (8) If insufficient funds are available to fully fund
98 scholarship awards to all eligible students, the Board of Trustees
99 of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall make the awards to
100 first-time students on a first-come, first-served basis; however,
101 priority consideration shall be given to persons previously
102 receiving awards under the program.

103 (9) The total amount of state funds that may be expended for
104 this program shall not exceed Three Hundred Twenty Thousand
105 Dollars (\$320,000.00) in any fiscal year.

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