MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE

By: Representative Scoggin

To: Universities and Colleges; Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 994

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-29, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR RECEIPTS UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT TUITION ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE THAT GRANT AWARDS SHALL BE BASED ON AN ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME AS DETERMINED BY THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA); TO REVISE THE CAP ON AWARD AMOUNTS BASED ON THE PERCENTAGE THRESHOLDS OF THE MEDIAN INCOME FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 37-106-29, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-106-29. (1) There is established the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) Program for college or university freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section 37-106-9, * * * which shall set the dates and deadlines for applying for an award under this section. The board shall establish such rules and regulations as it deems necessary and proper to carry out the purposes and intent of this section.
(2) To be eligible to receive Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) award, a student must meet the following qualifications:

(a) Be a resident of the State of Mississippi, which such residency status, for the purpose of receiving grant funds under the MTAG Program, shall be determined in the same manner as resident status for tuition purposes is prescribed in Sections 37-103-1 through 37-103-29, with exception being given to Section 37-103-17;

(b) Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) every year for which the student wishes to be considered for aid by the deadline established by the board;

(c) Complete the Mississippi Aid Application (MAAPP) every year for which the student wishes to be considered for aid by the deadline established by the board; and

(d) Have received acceptance for enrollment at any state institution of higher learning, public community or junior college located in this, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit two-year or four-year college or university located in this state and approved by the board.

(***3) The board shall approve *** Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant to *** freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior Mississippi residents who *** enroll, on at least a half-time basis, at any state institution of higher learning or
any four-year regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit
college or university located in this state.

( * * * ) Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance

Grants * * * shall be applied to tuition, rooms and meals, books, materials and fees not to exceed the student's total cost of attendance. Awards shall be scaled based upon the adjusted gross income (AGI) as determined by the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), as follows:

(a) For students from families making at or above one hundred percent (100%) of the median family income for a family of four (4) in Mississippi, the award shall not exceed One Thousand Dollars ($1,000.00) for junior and senior students attending state institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or four-year regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit colleges and universities in Mississippi, and Five Hundred Dollars ($500.00) for freshmen and sophomores attending state institutions of higher learning or public community or junior colleges in Mississippi, or regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit two-year or four-year colleges in Mississippi, which will be prorated per term, semester or quarter of the academic year for costs of attendance * * *

(b) For students from families making between fifty-one percent (51%) and ninety-nine percent (99%) of the median family income for a family of four (4) in Mississippi, the award shall not exceed One Thousand Five Hundred Dollars ($1,500.00) for
junior and senior students attending state institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or four-year regionally accredited, state approved, nonprofit colleges and universities in Mississippi, and Seven Hundred Fifty Dollars ($750.00) for freshmen and sophomores attending state institutions of higher learning or public community or junior colleges in Mississippi, or regionally accredited, state approved, nonprofit two-year or four-year colleges in Mississippi, which will be prorated per term, semester or quarter of the academic year for costs of attendance; and

(c) For students from families making at or below fifty percent (50%) of the median family income for a family of four (4) in Mississippi, the award shall not exceed Two Thousand Dollars ($2,000.00) for junior and senior students attending state institutions of higher learning in Mississippi or four-year regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit colleges and universities in Mississippi, and One Thousand Dollars ($1,000.00) for freshmen and sophomores attending state institutions of higher learning or public community or junior colleges in Mississippi, or regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit two-year or four-year colleges in Mississippi, which will be prorated per term, semester or quarter of the academic year for costs of attendance.

* * *

(5) By accepting a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant, the student is attesting to the accuracy, completeness and
correctness of information provided to demonstrate the student's eligibility. Falsification of such information shall result in the denial of any pending grant and revocation of any award currently held to the extent that no further payments shall be made. Any student knowingly making false statements in order to receive a grant shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable, upon conviction thereof, by a fine of up to Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00), a prison sentence of up to one (1) year in the county jail, or both, and shall be required to return all Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants wrongfully obtained.

(6) Eligibility for renewal of Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grants shall be evaluated at the end of each semester, or term, of each academic year. As a condition for renewal, a student shall:

(a) Make steady academic progress toward a certificate or degree, as outlined in the school Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards and certified by the institution's registrar * * *; and

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( * * *b) Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.50 calculated on a 4.0 scale at the end of each semester or trimester or term.

* * * ( * * *7) * * * Payment of the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant shall be made payable to the recipient
and the educational institution and mailed directly to the
institution **.  

(a) In order for an institution to remain eligible for
its students to participate in the Mississippi Resident Tuition
Assistance Grant Program, the institution shall comply with the
following requirements:

(b) A complete and accurate roster of the eligibility
status of each awarded student shall be made to the board for each
term, semester or quarter of the academic year the student
receives a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant **;

(b) The institution is required to make refunds to the
Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant Fund for any funds
which have not been disbursed to the recipient, in the case of
students who have received a grant but who terminate enrollment
during the academic term, semester or quarter of the academic year
if an institution's refund policies permit a student to receive a
refund in such instance. The recipient shall be responsible for
the refund of any funds which have been disbursed by the
institution in such instance **; and

(c) The board may conduct its own annual audits
of any institution participating in the Mississippi Resident
Tuition Assistance Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke
an institution's eligibility to receive future monies under the
program if it finds that the institution has not complied with the
provisions of this section. In determining a student's initial eligibility, the number of prior semesters enrolled will not be counted against the student.

(* * *9) No student may receive a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant for more than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one (1) baccalaureate degree or one (1) certificate or associate degree program per institution.

(* * *10) No student receiving a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant as provided in Section 37-106-31 shall be eligible to receive the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant pursuant to this section unless he is eligible for such award after the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant has been considered by the board when conducting an assessment of the financial resources available to the student. In no case shall any student receive any combination of student financial aid that would exceed the cost of attendance * * *.

(11) For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean, but not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in eligible institutions approved by the board.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2024.