

## REPORT OF CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

MR. SPEAKER AND MR. PRESIDENT:

We, the undersigned conferees, have had under consideration the amendments to the following entitled BILL:

H. B. No. 1567: Workforce development fund; bring forward code section on.

We, therefore, respectfully submit the following report and recommendation:

1. That the Senate recede from its Amendment No. 1.
2. That the House and Senate adopt the following amendment:

Amend by striking all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

48           **SECTION 1.** Section 37-73-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
49 amended as follows:

50           37-73-3. (1) Subject to appropriation by the Legislature,  
51 the Office of Workforce Development shall \* \* \* implement a career  
52 coaching program to support middle schools and high schools as  
53 students are exposed, prepared and connected to career avenues  
54 within and beyond the classroom setting. Through strong  
55 partnerships with economic and business leaders, paired with  
56 viable relationships with school districts, the career coaches  
57 shall target the alignment of students' strengths with intentional  
58 academic and work-based learning in pursuit of meaningful  
59 professional employment.

60           (2) Subject to appropriation by the Legislature, the Office  
61 of Workforce Development, working through the Department of

62 Employment Security as fiscal agent, shall establish rules and  
63 regulations to operate the career coaching program, which may  
64 include granting funds to eligible recipients such as state  
65 agencies, regional workforce entities and other nonprofits, to  
66 hire coaches. The Office of Workforce Development shall establish  
67 criteria for coaches and shall work with partner organizations to  
68 identify candidates and measure outcomes.

69 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-153-209, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
70 amended as follows:

71 37-153-209. (1) There is established the Mississippi Allied  
72 Health College and Career Navigator Grant Program, which shall be  
73 directed by the office for the purpose of hiring professionals, or  
74 navigators, to provide individual assistance and guidance to  
75 students to assist them in many areas, from maneuvering challenges  
76 while enrolled in college programs and understanding the job  
77 market to working through course challenges, and to help retain  
78 and graduate nursing and allied health students, at community and  
79 junior colleges. \* \* \* The Office of Workforce Development shall  
80 promulgate rules and regulations on the eligibility requirements  
81 to be a navigator. The grant program shall be funded from monies  
82 appropriated by the Legislature for that purpose.

83 (2) The office shall prescribe the terms and conditions of  
84 the grant program. To be eligible to receive a grant from the  
85 office under the grant program, a community college shall provide  
86 the following information:

87 (a) The number of nursing or allied health students who  
88 will be served by the program;

89 (b) A plan to provide data on participation and  
90 outcomes of the program, including a plan to report outcomes to  
91 the office throughout the funding commitment; and

92 (c) Any other information that the office determines is  
93 necessary.

94 **SECTION 3.** The following shall be codified as Section  
95 37-153-223:

96 37-153-223. (1) There is established the Individual  
97 Training Account Workforce Reinforcement Assistance (ITA-WRAP)  
98 Program, which shall be directed by the Office of Workforce  
99 Development for the purpose of providing education and training to  
100 citizens seeking employment in high-wage, high-demand industries  
101 with documented workforce shortages prioritized by the office.  
102 This program shall be subject to the availability of funds  
103 appropriated by the Legislature.

104 (2) As used in this section, the following words and phrases  
105 shall have the meanings as defined herein unless the context  
106 clearly indicates otherwise:

107 (a) "Recipient" means a community college, institution  
108 of higher learning, local workforce development area or other  
109 eligible recipient of grant funding under this section.

110 (b) "Trainee" means an individual receiving training or  
111 other services through programs under this section with the goal  
112 of becoming employed in a high-wage, high-demand industry.

113 (c) "High-wage, high-demand industry" means those  
114 industries paying above Mississippi's median annual income and  
115 prioritized by the office and the four (4) local workforce areas.

116 (d) "Eligible expenses" means a cost incurred by a  
117 recipient, pursuant to this section, to include trainee support,  
118 including tuition or registration expenses and supportive services  
119 such as childcare or transportation assistance.

120 (3) The Department of Employment Security shall serve as  
121 fiscal agent in administering the funds.

122 (4) Subject to appropriation by the Legislature, allocations  
123 to recipients shall be awarded by the office through an  
124 application process, which shall require the applicant to provide:

125 (a) A detailed explanation of the program the applicant  
126 intends to use awarded funds to create or expand, including:

127 (i) A description of the high-wage, high-demand  
128 field or workforce shortage area the program is intended to  
129 address;

130 (ii) The number of trainees who will be served by  
131 the program and how each will be tracked for reporting; and

132 (iii) The average wage rate for trainees receiving  
133 employment before and after completing the program;

134 (b) A proposed budget on how awarded funds will be  
135 expended, including a plan to consistently report expenditures to  
136 the office throughout the funding commitment;

137 (c) A plan to provide data on participation and  
138 outcomes of the program, including a plan to report outcomes to  
139 the office throughout the funding commitment; and

140 (d) Other relevant information as determined  
141 appropriate by the office.

142 (5) The office shall:

143 (a) Inform each recipient of its portion of the funds  
144 appropriated to the grant program; and

145 (b) Develop regulations and procedures to govern the  
146 administration of the grant program.

147 (7) The office may use a minimal amount of funds allocated  
148 for this section for the administration of the grant program, to  
149 be approved by the State Workforce Investment Board Executive  
150 Committee.

151 **SECTION 4.** (1) Within the limits of the funds available to  
152 the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services for such  
153 purpose, the Executive Director may grant a paid internship to  
154 students pursuing junior or senior undergraduate-level year  
155 coursework toward a bachelor's degree in a program that qualifies  
156 the individual to qualify to become a rehabilitation specialist or  
157 a benefit program specialist within the Mississippi Department of  
158 Rehabilitation Services. Those applicants deemed qualified shall

159 receive funds that may be used to pay for tuition, books and  
160 related fees to pursue their degree. It is the intent of the  
161 Legislature that the paid internship program (hereinafter referred  
162 to as the "program") shall be used as an incentive for students to  
163 develop job-related skills and to encourage careers as  
164 rehabilitation specialists or benefits programs specialists at the  
165 Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services.

166 (2) In order to be eligible for the program, an applicant  
167 must:

168 (a) Attend any college or school approved and  
169 designated by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation  
170 Services.

171 (b) Have successfully obtained a minimum of fifty-eight  
172 (58) semester hours toward a bachelor's degree in an eligible  
173 field as determined by the Mississippi Department of  
174 Rehabilitation Services from a Mississippi institution of higher  
175 learning. Applicants must have achieved a minimum Grade Point  
176 Average (GPA) on these semester hours of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. If  
177 accepted into the internship program, participants shall maintain  
178 a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in all coursework  
179 counted toward a bachelor's degree in an eligible field as  
180 determined by the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation  
181 Services.

182 (c) Work at least a total of three hundred (300) hours  
183 each summer at a Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation

184 Services' (MDRS) offices that is mutually agreed upon between MDRS  
185 and the respective intern.

186 (d) Agree to work as a rehabilitation specialist or a  
187 benefit program specialist at the Mississippi Department of  
188 Rehabilitation Services upon graduation for a period of time  
189 equivalent to one (1) year for each semester the Mississippi  
190 Department of Rehabilitation Services remits payment for tuition,  
191 books and/or related fees towards a bachelors degree in an  
192 eligible field as determined by the Mississippi Department of  
193 Rehabilitation Services.

194 (3) (a) Before being placed into the program, each  
195 applicant shall enter into a contract with the Mississippi  
196 Department of Rehabilitation Services, which shall be deemed a  
197 contract with the State of Mississippi, agreeing to the terms and  
198 conditions upon which the internship shall be granted to him or  
199 her. The contract shall include such terms and provisions  
200 necessary to carry out the full purpose and intent of this  
201 section. The form of such contract shall be prepared and approved  
202 by the Attorney General of this state, and shall be signed by the  
203 Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation  
204 Services and the participant.

205 (b) Upon entry into the program, participants will  
206 become employees of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation  
207 Services during their time in the program and shall be eligible  
208 for benefits such as medical insurance paid by the agency for the

209 participant; however, in accordance with Section 25-11-105II.(b),  
210 those participants shall not become members of the Public  
211 Employees' Retirement System while participating in the program.  
212 Participants shall not accrue personal or major medical leave  
213 while they are in the program.

214 (c) The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation  
215 Services shall have the authority to cancel any contract made  
216 between it and any program participant upon such cause being  
217 deemed sufficient by the Executive Director of the Mississippi  
218 Department of Rehabilitation Services.

219 (d) The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation  
220 Services is vested with full and complete authority and power to  
221 sue in its own name any participant for any damages due the state  
222 on any such uncompleted contract, which suit shall be filed and  
223 handled by the Attorney General of the state. The Mississippi  
224 Department of Rehabilitation Services may contract with a  
225 collection agency or banking institution, subject to approval by  
226 the Attorney General, for collection of any damages due the state  
227 from any participant. The State of Mississippi, the Mississippi  
228 Department of Rehabilitation Services and its employees are immune  
229 from any suit brought in law or equity for actions taken by the  
230 collection agency or banking institution incidental to or arising  
231 from their performance under the contract. The Mississippi  
232 Department of Rehabilitation Services, collection agency and  
233 banking institution may negotiate for the payment of a sum that is



234 less than full payment in order to satisfy any damages the  
235 participant owes the state, subject to approval by the Executive  
236 Director of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services.

237 (4) (a) Any recipient who is accepted into the program by  
238 the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services and who  
239 fails to complete undergraduate level coursework toward an  
240 approved degree, or withdraws from school at any time before  
241 completing his or her education, shall be liable to repay the  
242 Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services for all monies  
243 received during the time the recipient was in the program, at the  
244 rate of pay received by the employee while in the program,  
245 including benefits paid by the agency for the participant, and  
246 monies received for tuition, books and related fees used to pursue  
247 their degree with interest accruing at ten percent (10%) per annum  
248 from the date the recipient failed or withdrew from school. The  
249 recipient also shall not be liable for repayment for any money  
250 earned during the required summer hours. This money shall be  
251 considered earned by the recipient at the federal minimum wage  
252 rate.

253 (b) All paid internship compensation received by the  
254 recipient while in school shall be considered earned conditioned  
255 upon the fulfillment of the terms and obligations of the paid  
256 internship contract and this section. However, no recipient of  
257 the paid internship shall accrue personal or major medical leave  
258 while the recipient is pursuing junior or senior

259 undergraduate-level year coursework toward a bachelor's degree in  
260 a program that qualifies the individual to qualify to become a  
261 rehabilitation specialist or a benefit program specialist within  
262 the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services. The  
263 recipient shall not be liable for liquidated damages.

264 (c) If the recipient does not work as a rehabilitation  
265 specialist or a benefit program specialist at the Mississippi  
266 Department of Rehabilitation Services for the period required  
267 under subsection (2) (d) of this section, the recipient shall be  
268 liable for repayment on demand of the remaining portion of the  
269 compensation that the recipient was paid while in the program  
270 which has not been unconditionally earned, with interest accruing  
271 at ten percent (10%) per annum from the recipient's date of  
272 graduation or the date that the recipient last worked at the  
273 Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, whichever is  
274 the later date.

275 **SECTION 5.** Sections 5 through 9 of this act shall be known  
276 and cited as the "Paramedics Recruitment and Retention Scholarship  
277 Program Act."

278 **SECTION 6.** (1) The Legislature finds the following:

279 (a) The public health crisis related to COVID-19  
280 resulted in a general disruption in the Mississippi economy and  
281 workforce, particularly in the healthcare industry.

282 (b) COVID-19 and the closing of or reduction in  
283 services at rural hospitals created an unprecedented demand on  
284 emergency medical response providers.

285 (c) Consequently, the number of paramedics decreased in  
286 the State of Mississippi by approximately nineteen percent (19%).

287 (d) The lack of paramedics directly impacts all  
288 Mississippians ability to rely on quality emergency care.

289 (2) Therefore, the intent of the Legislature is:

290 (a) To provide funding to the Office of Workforce  
291 Development to establish a scholarship program for the purposes  
292 outlined herein.

293 (b) To provide funding for grants to cover the full  
294 cost of tuition, fees, books and any required uniforms for  
295 qualified applicants to attend an accredited paramedic program.

296 (c) To provide funding for grants to reimburse the cost  
297 of a qualified applicant's fee for the successful completion of  
298 the National Registry Paramedic cognitive and psychomotor  
299 examinations.

300 (d) To gauge the effectiveness of this program by  
301 gathering data related to the participation and employment  
302 outcomes in order to replicate successful efforts in future  
303 workforce development programs.

304 **SECTION 7.** (1) There is established the Paramedics  
305 Recruitment and Retention Scholarship Program ("the program").  
306 The scholarship program shall be used by the Office of Workforce

307 Development, with the Mississippi Department of Employment  
308 Security acting as the fiscal agent, for the purpose of providing  
309 funding for grants to cover the full cost of tuition, fees, books  
310 and any required uniforms for qualified applicants to attend an  
311 accredited paramedic program and to reimburse the cost of a  
312 qualified applicant's fee for the successful completion of the  
313 National Registry Paramedic cognitive and psychomotor  
314 examinations. The scholarship program shall be funded from monies  
315 appropriated by the Legislature for that purpose.

316 (2) For the purposes of Sections 5 through 9 of this act, a  
317 "paramedic" means a certified healthcare professional who  
318 specializes in providing emergency medical treatment to people who  
319 are injured or ill, typically in a setting outside of a hospital.

320 (3) The Office of Workforce Development shall prescribe the  
321 terms and conditions of grants awarded under the program. To  
322 qualify for a grant under this program, an applicant must:

323 (a) Be a certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT);

324 (b) Have the necessary requisites for an accredited  
325 paramedic program;

326 (c) Commit to locate in the State of Mississippi for a  
327 minimum of three (3) years; and

328 (d) Meet any other conditions for receipt as prescribed  
329 by the Office of Workforce Development.

330 (4) The Office of Workforce Development may use a maximum of  
331 five percent (5%) of funds appropriated for the program for the  
332 administration of the program.

333 **SECTION 8.** The office shall enter into a grant contract  
334 agreement with each recipient of a grant under the program that  
335 incorporates the following obligations and conditions:

336 (a) The recipient of a grant shall commit to serving as  
337 a paramedic for three (3) continuous years in the State of  
338 Mississippi;

339 (b) If any recipient of a grant under the program does  
340 not engage in serving as a paramedic in accordance with the terms  
341 of Sections 5 through 9 of this act, the recipient shall be  
342 obligated to repay the grant amounts received, together with  
343 interest thereon at the maximum rate allowed by Mississippi law or  
344 the federal discount rate plus five percent (5%) per year,  
345 whichever is less, the interest to accrue from the date that each  
346 payment of funds was received by the recipient;

347 (c) No interest shall accrue and there shall be no  
348 obligation to repay the principal sums accrued during any one (1)  
349 period of time that the recipient involuntarily serves on active  
350 duty in the United States Armed Forces; and

351 (d) Repayment of the principal with interest shall be  
352 due and payable in full immediately on the occurrence of either of  
353 the following events:

354 (i) Failure to remain in the State of Mississippi  
355 for three (3) continuous years for any reason other than temporary  
356 personal illness; or

357 (ii) Failure to serve as a paramedic on a  
358 regularly sustained basis as provided in the eligibility  
359 requirements of Section 7.

360 **SECTION 9.** (1) The Office of Workforce Development shall  
361 submit an annual report on the grant program to the Governor, the  
362 Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
363 the Chair of the House Workforce Development Committee and the  
364 Chair of the Senate Economic and Workforce Development Committee.  
365 The report shall contain a detailed explanation of how the funds  
366 appropriated for the program were awarded and how many paramedics  
367 have participated in the grant program and their employment  
368 outcomes.

369 (2) The Office of Workforce Development is authorized to  
370 enter into a memorandum of agreement with any public or nonpublic  
371 school which provides secondary education to students enrolled  
372 therein, for the purpose of allowing students who are at least  
373 seventeen (17) years of age to be eligible for enrollment in any  
374 accredited paramedic training program without any cost to the  
375 students, through dual-credit or dual-enrollment class offerings  
376 through an accredited entity authorized by the office to provide  
377 such trainings for purposes of the program. However, such  
378 students shall not be eligible to take any examination for

379 certification as a paramedic until the time that he or she attains  
380 the age of eighteen (18), at which time he or she would be allowed  
381 to take the certification examination to become a certified  
382 Emergency Medical Technician (EMT).

383         **SECTION 10.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
384 and after July 1, 2024.

**Further, amend by striking the title in its entirety and  
inserting in lieu thereof the following:**

1         AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-73-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 MODIFY THE DIRECTIVE OF THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FROM  
3 PILOTING A CAREER COACHING PROGRAM IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND HIGH  
4 SCHOOLS, TO IMPLEMENTING SUCH PROGRAM FOR THE LONG TERM; TO AMEND  
5 SECTION 37-153-209, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE  
6 QUALIFICATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI ALLIED HEALTH COLLEGE AND CAREER  
7 NAVIGATOR TO PROVIDE THAT THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
8 SHALL PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS ON THE ELIGIBILITY  
9 REQUIREMENTS OF THE NAVIGATORS; TO CREATE NEW SECTION 37-153-223,  
10 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CREATE THE INDIVIDUAL TRAINING  
11 ACCOUNT WORKFORCE REINFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE (ITA-WRAP) PROGRAM,  
12 WHICH SHALL BE DIRECTED BY THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR  
13 THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO CITIZENS  
14 SEEKING EMPLOYMENT IN HIGH-WAGE, HIGH-DEMAND INDUSTRIES WITH  
15 DOCUMENTED WORKFORCE SHORTAGES PRIORITIZED BY THE OFFICE; TO  
16 PROVIDE FOR DEFINITIONS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF  
17 EMPLOYMENT SECURITY SHALL SERVE AS FISCAL AGENT IN ADMINISTERING  
18 THE FUNDS; TO CREATE A NEW SECTION OF LAW TO AUTHORIZE THE  
19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION  
20 SERVICES TO GRANT A PAID INTERNSHIP TO STUDENTS PURSUING JUNIOR OR  
21 SENIOR UNDERGRADUATE-LEVEL YEAR COURSEWORK TOWARD A BACHELOR'S  
22 DEGREE IN A PROGRAM THAT QUALIFIES THE INDIVIDUAL TO BECOME A  
23 REHABILITATION SPECIALIST OR A BENEFIT PROGRAM SPECIALIST WITHIN  
24 THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES; TO PROVIDE  
25 THAT THE FUNDS MAY BE USED FOR TUITION, BOOKS AND RELATED FEES; TO  
26 PROVIDE THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE ELIGIBLE AND REMAIN ELIGIBLE FOR  
27 THE INTERNSHIP; TO PROVIDE THE TERMS OF THE INTERNSHIP; TO CREATE  
28 THE PARAMEDICS RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO  
29 PROVIDE THAT THE PROGRAM SHALL BE USED BY THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE  
30 DEVELOPMENT, WITH THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT  
31 SECURITY ACTING AS THE FISCAL AGENT, FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING  
32 FUNDING FOR GRANTS TO COVER THE FULL COST OF TUITION, FEES, BOOKS

33 AND ANY REQUIRED UNIFORMS FOR QUALIFIED APPLICANTS TO ATTEND AN  
34 ACCREDITED PARAMEDIC PROGRAM AND TO REIMBURSE THE COST OF A  
35 QUALIFIED APPLICANT'S FEE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE  
36 NATIONAL REGISTRY PARAMEDIC COGNITIVE AND PSYCHOMOTOR  
37 EXAMINATIONS; TO PROVIDE HOW AN APPLICANT MAY QUALIFY FOR A GRANT;  
38 TO PROVIDE THAT THE RECIPIENT OF A GRANT SHALL COMMIT TO SERVING  
39 AS A PARAMEDIC FOR THREE CONTINUOUS YEARS IN THE STATE; TO PROVIDE  
40 THE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; TO AUTHORIZE THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE  
41 DEVELOPMENT TO ENTER INTO MOAS WITH LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS FOR THE  
42 PURPOSE OF ALLOWING CERTAIN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TO ENROLL IN  
43 ACCREDITED PARAMEDIC TRAINING PROGRAMS THROUGH DUAL-CREDIT OR  
44 DUAL-ENROLLMENT; TO PROVIDE THAT SUCH STUDENT CANNOT TAKE THE  
45 CERTIFICATION EXAM UNTIL HE OR SHE ATTAINS 18 YEARS OF AGE; AND  
46 FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

CONFEREES FOR THE HOUSE

X (SIGNED)  
Bell (21st)

X (SIGNED)  
Lott

X (SIGNED)  
McMillan

CONFEREES FOR THE SENATE

X (SIGNED)  
Sparks

X (SIGNED)  
Suber

X (SIGNED)  
Johnson