

3/20 2024

Chapter No. 397
13/HR40/R1486
JP / EW

HOUSE BILL NO. 776

Originated in House  Clerk

HOUSE BILL NO. 776

AN ACT TO CREATE NEW SECTIONS 37-146-1, 37-146-3, 37-146-5, 37-146-7, 37-146-9, 37-146-11, 37-146-13, 37-146-17, 37-146-19 AND 37-146-21, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ENACT THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL DENTISTS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF IDENTIFYING QUALIFIED UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE FOR DENTAL SCHOOL MATRICULATION; TO ESTABLISH THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL DENTISTS SCHOLARSHIP COMMISSION TO PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO PRESCRIBE APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS AND PROVIDE A MAXIMUM NUMBER OF NEW ADMISSIONS PER YEAR; TO PROVIDE STANDARDS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE THAT THE STUDENT IS OBLIGATED FOR ONE YEAR OF PRACTICE AS A DENTIST IN A RURAL AREA FOR EVERY YEAR OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE; TO DEFINE THE LIMITATION OF PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-1, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-1. **Mississippi Rural Dentists Program established.**

There is established the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program for the purpose of identifying and recruiting qualified university and college students from rural areas of the state for dental school matriculation. The program shall consist of three

(3) distinct phases through which participants will progress, including:

- (a) Undergraduate pre-dental education;
- (b) Dental school and residency; and
- (c) Initial entry into dental practice in a rural or underserved area of the State of Mississippi.

SECTION 2. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-3, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-3. **Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Commission; compensation; program funding.** (1) The Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program shall be administered by a commission to be known as the "Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Commission." The commission shall be directed by a board composed of the following members:

(a) Two (2) dentists appointed by and from the membership of the Mississippi Dental Association, the term of which shall be three (3) years and who may be reappointed for one (1) additional term;

(b) One (1) dentist appointed by and from the membership of each of the following organizations, the term of which shall be three (3) years and who may be reappointed for one (1) additional term:

(i) Mississippi Dental Society;

(ii) Mississippi Academy of General Dentistry; and

(iii) Mississippi Chapter, American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry;

(c) Two (2) designees of the Dean of the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry whose terms are at the discretion of the dean, at least one (1) of whom is a member of the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry Admissions Committee; and

(d) Two (2) dental students, one (1) of whom shall be selected yearly through a process developed by the Dean of the School of Dentistry in consultation with the chairs of the various departments.

(2) The pre-professional advisors from the accredited four-year colleges and universities in the State of Mississippi shall comprise an advisory committee to the commission in the administration of the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program.

(3) Vacancies on the commission must be filled in a manner consistent with the original appointments.

(4) All appointments to the commission must be made no later than September 1, 2013. After the members are appointed, the Program Director of the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program shall set a date for the organizational meeting that is mutually acceptable to the majority of the commission members. The organizational meeting shall be for the purposes of organizing the commission and establishing rules for transacting its

business. A majority of the members of the commission shall constitute a quorum at all commission meetings. An affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting shall be required in the adoption of rules, reports and in any other actions taken by the commission. At the organizational meeting, the commission shall elect a chair and vice chair from the members appointed according to paragraphs (a) through (d) of subsection (1). The chair shall serve for a term of two (2) years, upon the expiration of which, the vice chair shall assume the office of chair.

(5) After the organizational meeting, the commission shall hold no less than two (2) meetings annually.

(6) The commission may form an executive committee for the purpose of transacting business that must be conducted before the next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission. All actions taken by the executive committee must be ratified by the commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

(7) Members of the commission shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed, subject to the availability of funding, for mileage and actual and necessary expenses incurred in attending meetings of the commission, as provided in Section 25-3-41.

(8) Funding for the establishment and continued operation of the program and commission shall be appropriated out of any money

in the State General Fund not already appropriated to the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

SECTION 3. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-5, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-5. **Powers and duties of the commission.** The Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

(a) Developing the administrative policy for the commission and the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program;

(b) Promulgating rules and regulations, with the advice and consent of the University of Mississippi Medical Center, pertaining to the implementation and operation of the Rural Dentists Scholarship Program;

(c) Developing and implementing strategies and activities for the identification and recruitment of students and for marketing the program and for the implementation of the program. In developing these strategies, the board shall seek the input of various organizations and entities.

(d) Establishing a budget, with the advice and consent of the University of Mississippi Medical Center, to support the activities of the program and periodically reviewing and if appropriate, revising, the scholarship and other stipends offered through the program;

(e) Advising the University of Mississippi Medical Center regarding hiring appropriate staff necessary to work in

conjunction with the Executive Director of the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program.

(f) Reviewing participants' progress in the program and mentoring students and dentists participating in the program;

(g) The commission shall have the authority through use of generally applicable definitions, to designate an area of the state as underserved or rural. The method by which these designations shall be made shall be contained in rules and regulations promulgated by the commission.

SECTION 4. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-7, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-7. Identification and recruitment of undergraduate participants; designation of underserved or rural area; applicant qualifications; maximum number of new admissions per year. (1)

The commission shall develop and implement policies and procedures designed to recruit, identify and enroll undergraduate students who demonstrate necessary interest, commitment, aptitude and academic achievement to pursue careers as dentists in rural or dentally underserved areas of Mississippi, and to develop and implement the programs designed to foster successful entry of participants into dental school, completion of dental school, and establishment and maintenance of a career in dentistry in a rural or underserved area of Mississippi.

(2) The commission shall have the authority through use of generally applicable definitions, to designate an area of the state as underserved or rural.

(3) The commission, in conjunction with the University of Mississippi Medical Center, shall have the authority to provide students selected for scholarship funding with faculty mentors and other programs designed to enhance the students' likelihood of admission to the dental school. The commission and the University of Mississippi Medical Center will develop coursework that will help provide scholarship students with the skills necessary for sustained and successful dental practice in rural Mississippi.

(4) Each applicant for admission to the program must submit an application to the commission that conforms to requirements established by the commission.

(5) In selecting participants for the program, the board may only accept an applicant if his or her academic record and other characteristics, if given consideration by the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry Admissions Committee, would be considered credible and competitive.

(6) An applicant for the program may be admitted only upon a majority vote of the members of the commission.

(7) Up to three (3) students will be admitted to the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program each year.

SECTION 5. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-9, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-9. **Participants to adhere to program policies and practices to remain in program; forgiveness or repayment of financial assistance under certain circumstances.** (1)

Participants must adhere to the policies and practices as stipulated by the commission to continue in the program.

(2) Students in the program may receive tuition or other financial support that may be provided by the commission. If a student in the program is admitted to and completes dental school, any tuition or other educational and living support provided to the student by the commission will be forgiven. However, if the student is not successful in being accepted into dental school within three (3) years of entry into the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program, or if the student otherwise breaches his or her agreement with the commission, all financial assistance provided to the student must be repaid according to policies adopted by the board.

SECTION 6. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-11, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-11. **Participants may apply to the accredited dental school in Mississippi; early admissions process for students applying to University of Mississippi School of Dentistry.** (1)

Students in the program may apply to the Mississippi Dental School.

(2) Students in the program seeking admission to the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry shall be eligible

for the admissions process pursuant to criteria established by the School of Dentistry Admissions Committee which will include consideration of the attributes of participation in the program.

(3) In carrying out the admissions process developed for the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program participants under this section, the goal is for the program to work with the School of Dentistry to enhance the capability of participants to successfully enter and complete dental school and enter practice in rural or underserved areas in Mississippi. To the extent feasible, the early admissions process should be completed before December 1 of the year preceding a student's admission to dental school.

SECTION 7. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-13, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-13. Ongoing financial support for program participants who attend dental school; preference for ongoing support to University of Mississippi School of Dentistry students; students obligated for one year of practice for every year of financial assistance received. (1) Subject to the availability of funding, students in the program who successfully matriculate to dental school are eligible for ongoing financial support in accordance with policies and requirements of the commission and in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. The number of students to be supported at the University of Mississippi

School of Dentistry and at other schools will be established by policy prescribed by the commission.

(2) Subject to the availability of funding, students enrolled at the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry may receive tuition support, funding to assist with the cost of books and a living stipend, as prescribed by policy of the commission and in accordance with applicable regulations. Preferences for ongoing funding must be given to those students admitted to the University of Mississippi School of Dentistry.

(3) For each year that a student in dental school receives financial assistance, the student is obligated for one (1) year of practice as a dentist in a rural or underserved area in Mississippi. Breach of the agreement at any stage of training shall invoke the repayment of all financial assistance provided to the student through the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program along with other penalties that may be prescribed in policy by the commission.

SECTION 8. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-17, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-17. Program participants required to enter practice of dentistry in health professional shortage, rural or underserved area upon completion of residency for number of years corresponding to number of years assistance received up to maximum of five years; breach of contract; liability for repayment. (1)

Upon completion of dental school and/or a dental residency program

approved by the commission, a participant in the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program must proceed to enter the full-time practice of dentistry in a rural or underserved area in Mississippi, as defined by the commission and consistent with generally acceptable designations. If an area experiences significant changes in its dental or general community which are not reflected by dental health professional shortage area (HPSA), the commission may receive testimony and, in its discretion, may qualify the area as a dentally underserved or rural area to allow the program participant to fulfill his or her practice obligation.

(2) Upon entering the practice of dentistry, a participant in the program must serve in a dental health professional shortage area (HPSA) or rural area otherwise approved for practice under subsection (1) of this section for a number of years which corresponds to the number of years, not to exceed five (5), for which the participant received funding through the program. Any participant who fails to complete the period of practice for which he or she is obligated to provide services in a dental health professional shortage area (HPSA) or rural area in exchange for financial assistance received through the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program shall be liable for the repayment of all financial assistance provided to the participant through the program, along with other penalties that may be prescribed by the commission, an amount which shall be reduced on a pro rata basis

for actual years of practice by the dentist in the area designated by the commission.

SECTION 9. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-19, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-19. **Initial practice entry support system for program participants.** The Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program, acting through the commission, shall make an effort to establish an initial practice entry support system for participants in the program.

SECTION 10. The following provision shall be codified as Section 37-146-21, Mississippi Code of 1972:

37-146-21. **Limitation of program and commission governing and administrative authority.** This chapter may not be construed as granting the Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship Program or its governing commission any governing or administrative authority over any program administered by any college, university, dental school or residency program in this state or any other program established by state law.

SECTION 11. This act shall take effect and be in force from
and after July 1, 2013.

PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
January 25, 2013


SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PASSED BY THE SENATE
March 7, 2013


PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR


GOVERNOR

2:29pm
3/20/13