AN ACT TO CREATE THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) NURSE/ALLIED HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION ACT; TO STATE LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT; TO ESTABLISH THE ACCELERATE MISSISSIPPI NURSING/ALLIED HEALTH GRANT PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH THE ACCELERATE MISSISSIPPI PHYSICIAN RESIDENCY AND FELLOWSHIP START-UP GRANT PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH AND ADMINISTER THE MISSISSIPPI ALLIED HEALTH COLLEGE AND CAREER NAVIGATOR GRANT PROGRAM; TO OUTLINE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE APPLICATIONS AND FOR THE GRANT AWARDS; TO ALLOW THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO USE A MAXIMUM OF 2% OF FUNDS APPROPRIATED FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES OF THE GRANT PROGRAMS, TO THE EXTENT PERMISSIBLE UNDER FEDERAL LAW; TO DIRECT THE OFFICE TO TRY TO MINIMIZE ANY EXPENSE OF ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDS BY ESTABLISHING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MIRRORING PAST PROGRAMS UTILIZING FEDERAL COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS; TO REQUIRE THE OFFICE OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO CERTIFY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION THAT EACH EXPENDITURE APPROPRIATED TO THE OFFICE IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY CRITERIA REGARDING THE USE OF MONIES FROM THE CORONAVIRUS STATE FISCAL RECOVERY FUND; TO PROVIDE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE BY OCTOBER 1 OF EACH YEAR; TO PROVIDE THAT GRANT FUNDS SHALL BE AVAILABLE THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2026, OR ON THE DATE OF THE FUND EXPENDITURE DEADLINE PROVIDED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, WHICHEVER OCCURS LATER; TO PROVIDE THAT EACH GRANT RECIPIENT SHALL CERTIFY, FOR ANY PROJECT FOR WHICH A GRANT IS AWARDED, THAT IF THE PROJECT IS NOT COMPLETED BY DECEMBER 31, 2026, AND THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS DOES NOT ENACT AN EXTENSION OF THE DEADLINE ON THE AVAILABILITY OF ARPA FUNDS, THEN THE GRANT RECIPIENT WILL COMPLETE THE PROJECT THROUGH OTHER FUNDS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:
SECTION 1. (1) This article shall be known and may be cited as the "American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Nurse/Allied Health Workforce Development and Retention Act." Under this article, the Legislature creates the "Accelerate Mississippi Nursing/Allied Health Grant Program," the "Accelerate Mississippi Physician Residency and Fellowship Start-Up Grant Program" and the "Mississippi Allied Health College and Career Navigator Grant Program."

(2) As used in this article, "office" means the Office of Workforce Development established in Section 37-153-7.

SECTION 2. (1) The Mississippi Legislature finds that:

(a) The public health crisis related to COVID-19 resulted in a general disruption in the Mississippi economy and workforce, particularly in hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities and other health care facilities across the state;

(b) Workforce shortages exist in the health care industry; and

(c) The availability of unprecedented federal funding to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the workforce and economy has created a unique opportunity for the office, working with community colleges, to provide education and training to help Mississippians find employment in the nursing, allied health and other health care fields, including paramedics.

(2) Therefore, the intent of the Mississippi Legislature is:
(a) To provide funding for outreach efforts to connect citizens seeking employment in nursing, allied health, and other health care fields, including paramedics, with the education and training required to obtain necessary skills for relevant employment in the state;

(b) To provide funding for new and increased capacity in existing nursing and allied health training programs, including accredited paramedic programs, or to help retain and graduate nursing and allied health students, including students in an accredited paramedic program, to include any required equipment or supplies, at community and junior colleges or through other entities facilitating healthcare-focused workforce training programs across the state;

(c) To provide funding for new and increased capacity in physician residency and fellowship programs in hospitals across the state; and

(d) To gauge the effectiveness of these programs by gathering data related to participation and wage and employment outcomes in order to replicate successful efforts in future workforce development programs.

SECTION 3. (1) There is established the Accelerate Mississippi Nursing/Allied Health Grant Program, which shall be directed by the office for the purpose of increasing capacity in nursing and allied health training programs, including accredited
paramedic programs, job sectors which were severely impacted by
the disruption to the economy and workforce caused by COVID-19.

(2) For purposes of this section, the following words shall
have the meanings ascribed herein unless the context requires
otherwise:

(a) "Grant program" means the program established in
this section, which provides funding, as determined by the office,
from federal COVID-19 relief funds to sustain and increase
capacity in nursing and allied health education and training
programs, including accredited paramedic programs, or to help
retain and graduate nursing and allied health students, at
community and junior colleges or other entities facilitating
healthcare-focused training programs as determined by the office.

(b) "Recipient" means a community or junior college or
other entities facilitating healthcare-focused training programs
as determined by the office.

(c) "Trainee" means an individual receiving training or
other services through the grant program under this article with
the goal of becoming employed in the nursing or allied health
field, including as a licensed paramedic.

(d) "COVID-19" means the Coronavirus Disease 2019.

(e) "Federal COVID-19 relief funds" means funds
allocated to the State of Mississippi from the Coronavirus State
Fiscal Recovery Fund in Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan
Act of 2021 (Public Law No. 117-2).
(f) "High-wage, high-demand industry" means those nursing or allied health jobs, including paramedics, paying above Mississippi's median annual income and prioritized by the office.

(g) "Eligible expenses" means a cost incurred by a recipient under this article, to include:

(i) Necessary equipment or other supplies to sustain or increase capacity in nursing or allied health training programs, including accredited paramedic programs;

(ii) Necessary infrastructure, including building renovation or construction, for increasing capacity in nursing or allied health training programs, including accredited paramedic programs;

(iii) Curricula or other academic or training materials to sustain or increase capacity in nursing or allied health training programs, including accredited paramedic programs;

(iv) Remote learning or other classroom technology to sustain or increase capacity in nursing or allied health training programs, including accredited paramedic programs;

(v) Job placement services for nursing or allied health students and graduates, including those in accredited paramedic programs;

(vi) Recruitment programs for nursing or allied health students and graduates, including those in accredited paramedic programs;
(vii) Other services aimed at helping retain and graduate current nursing and allied health students, including those in accredited paramedic programs.

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

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

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

(i) A description of the nursing or allied health workforce shortage the program is intended to address, including specific information from hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities or other health care providers in the region;

(ii) Any relevant waitlist or other information demonstrating high demand for graduates from the relevant nursing or allied health program;

(iii) The number of nursing or allied health students who will be served by the program; and

(iv) The average wage rate for nursing or allied health students receiving employment after completing the program;

(b) A proposed budget on how awarded funds will be expended, including a plan to consistently report expenditures to the office throughout the funding commitment;
(c) A plan to provide data on participation and outcomes of the program, including a plan to report outcomes to the office throughout the funding commitment; and

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

(5) Applicants agreeing to commit a portion of their federal COVID-19 relief funds, if they received federal COVID-19 relief funds directly, or other state, federal or private funds as supplemental matching funds to offset the total cost of the approved program will be prioritized for approval.

(6) The office shall:

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

(b) Develop regulations and procedures to govern the administration of the grant program;

(c) Prioritize jobs within the nursing or allied health fields which are currently experiencing staffing shortages in hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities and other health care providers across the state; and

(d) Prioritize jobs which are high-wage, high-demand jobs within the nursing and allied health fields, including the paramedic field.

(7) Seventy-five percent (75%) of the funds provided through the appropriations process for this program shall be reserved for community and junior colleges. A maximum of twenty-five percent
(25%) of the funds provided through the appropriations process for
this program may be awarded to recipients other than a community
or junior college which facilitate healthcare-focused training
programs as determined by the office.

SECTION 4. (1) There is established the Accelerate
Mississippi Physician Residency and Fellowship Start-Up Grant
Program, which shall be directed by the office for the purpose of
creating new or increasing capacity in existing physician
residency and fellowship programs in hospitals, which were
severely impacted by the disruption to the economy and workforce
caused by COVID-19.

(2) For purposes of this section, the following words shall
have the meanings ascribed herein unless the context requires
otherwise:

(a) "Grant program" means the program established in
this section, which provides funding, as determined by the office,
from federal COVID-19 relief funds to create new or increase
capacity in existing physician residency and fellowship programs
at general acute care hospitals in the State of Mississippi which
are licensed by the Mississippi State Department of Health.

(b) "Recipient" means a general acute care hospital in
the State of Mississippi which is licensed by the Mississippi
State Department of Health.

(c) "Residency and fellowship programs" means advanced
training programs in medical or surgical specialty areas which are
accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education or a similar accreditation body.

(d) "COVID-19" means the Coronavirus Disease 2019.

(e) "Federal COVID-19 relief funds" means funds allocated to the State of Mississippi from the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund in Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law No. 117-2).

(f) "Eligible expenses" means a cost incurred by a recipient, pursuant to this article, to include:

(i) Equipment or other supplies necessary for accreditation;

(ii) Necessary infrastructure, including building, renovation or construction, for accreditation;

(iii) Curricula or other academic or training materials necessary for accreditation;

(iv) Stipends for the recruitment, hiring and development of program directors, program coordinators, faculty and/or teaching staff and clinic staff necessary for accreditation; and

(v) Remote learning or other classroom technology.

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

(4) Subject to appropriation by the Legislature, allocations to recipients shall be awarded by the office through an application process, which shall require the applicant to provide:
(a) Evidence that the applicant is in the process of preparing for accreditation, has applied for accreditation or has received accreditation for a new residency or fellowship program, or increased capacity in an existing residency or fellowship program;

(b) A detailed explanation of the residency or fellowship program the applicant intends to use awarded funds to create or expand, to include:

(i) A description of the workforce shortage the residency or fellowship program is intended to address, including specific information from health care providers in the region;

(ii) Any relevant waitlist or other information demonstrating high demand for medical school graduates to enter the residency or fellowship program;

(iii) The number of residents who will be served by the residency or fellowship program;

(iv) The budget for the residency or fellowship program, including a plan showing sustainability after accreditation and any required federal approval of the program; and

(v) The average wage rate for residents or fellows receiving employment after completing the program;

(c) A proposed budget on how awarded funds will be expended, including a plan to consistently report expenditures to the office throughout the funding commitment;
(d) A plan to provide data on participation and outcomes of the residency or fellowship program, including a plan to report outcomes to the office throughout the funding commitment; and
(e) Other relevant information as determined appropriate by the office.

(5) Applicants agreeing to commit a portion of their federal COVID-19 relief funds, if they received federal COVID-19 relief funds directly, or other state, federal or private funds as supplemental matching funds to offset the total cost of the approved program shall be prioritized for approval.

(6) The office shall:
(a) Inform each recipient of its portion of the funds appropriated to the grant program;
(b) Develop regulations and procedures to govern the administration of the grant program;
(c) Prioritize residency or fellowship programs within medical or surgical specialties which are currently experiencing staffing shortages in hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities and other health care providers across the state;
(d) Prioritize residency or fellowship programs which produce graduates in high-demand medical and surgical fields;
(e) Establish a schedule of application deadlines and a system for considering applications on a rotating basis; and
(f) Ensure that every effort be made, in accordance with the priorities in this subsection, to provide funds for the placement of one (1) resident with each recipient before considering awarding funds for the placement of additional residents in the same round of consideration.

**SECTION 5.** (1) There is established the Mississippi Allied Health College and Career Navigator Grant Program, which shall be directed by the office for the purpose of hiring professionals, or navigators, to provide individual assistance and guidance to students to assist them in many areas, from maneuvering challenges while enrolled in college programs and understanding the job market to working through course challenges, and to help retain and graduate nursing and allied health students, at community and junior colleges. Such navigators must be at least a registered nurse with at least two (2) years of experience in nursing. The grant program shall be funded from monies appropriated by the Legislature for that purpose.

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

(a) The number of nursing or allied health students who will be served by the program;
(b) A plan to provide data on participation and outcomes of the program, including a plan to report outcomes to the office throughout the funding commitment; and

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

SECTION 6. The office may use a maximum of two percent (2%) of funds appropriated for the administrative expenses of the grant programs authorized in Sections 3, 4 and 5 of this act, to the extent permissible under federal law. The office shall try to minimize any expense of administrative funds by establishing policies and procedures mirroring past programs utilizing federal COVID-19 relief funds.

SECTION 7. The office shall certify to the Department of Finance and Administration that each expenditure of the funds appropriated to the office under this article is in compliance with the guidelines, guidance, rules, regulations and/or other criteria, as may be amended from time to time, of the United States Department of the Treasury regarding the use of monies from the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund in Section 9901 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Public Law No. 117-1).

SECTION 8. The office shall provide a comprehensive report on the use and effectiveness of funds distributed under the grant programs created in this article, to include wage data and employment outcomes for residents, to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, Chairs of the Senate and House
Appropriations Committees, Chair of the Senate Economic and Workforce Development Committee, and Chair of the House Workforce Development Committee by October 1 of each year of the existence of the program and for at least three (3) years after the program ceases.

SECTION 9. Grant funds shall be available under this article through December 31, 2026, or on the date of the fund expenditure deadline provided by the federal government, whichever occurs later. Each grant recipient shall certify, for any project for which a grant is awarded, that if the project is not completed by December 31, 2026, and the United States Congress does not enact an extension of the deadline on the availability of ARPA funds, then the grant recipient will complete the project through other funds.

SECTION 10. If any section, paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase or part of this article is declared to be in conflict with federal law, or if for any reason is declared to be invalid or of no effect, the remaining sections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses, phrases or parts thereof shall be in no matter affected thereby but shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. Sections 1 through 9 of this act shall be codified as a new article in Title 37, Chapter 153, Mississippi Code of 1972.

SECTION 12. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2023.