

By: Representatives Wallace, Miller,
Straughter, Thornton

To: Public Health and
Welfare;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1166

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE WELFARE REFORM RESEARCH AND
2 ACCOUNTABILITY ACT; TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
3 SERVICES SHALL COLLECT AND REPORT UPON DATA IN CONNECTION WITH
4 FEDERALLY FUNDED WELFARE PROGRAMS; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF
5 HUMAN SERVICES TO COLLECT AND REPORT ON INFORMATION WITH RESPECT
6 TO THE TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) PROGRAM; TO
7 PROVIDE THAT THE LEGISLATURE AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
8 SHALL SELECT AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO CONDUCT A
9 LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TANF AND RELATED
10 WELFARE REFORMS; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
11 COOPERATE IN A STUDY BY AN INDEPENDENT EXPERT OF THE IMPACT UPON
12 MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT NONCITIZENS OF THE DENIAL OR TERMINATION OF
13 ASSISTANCE UNDER THE FOOD STAMPS, TANF, MEDICAID, AND TITLE XX
14 SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

16 SECTION 1. This act shall be known as the "Welfare Reform
17 Research and Accountability Act."

18 SECTION 2. (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services
19 shall collect and report upon all data in connection with
20 federally funded or assisted welfare programs as federal law may
21 require, including, but not limited to, Section 411 of the
22 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of
23 1996, and its implementing regulations and any amendments to the
24 act as may from time to time be enacted.

25 (2) In addition to and on the same schedule as the data
26 collection required by federal law and subsection (1) of this
27 section, the Department of Human Services shall collect and report
28 on further information with respect to the Temporary Assistance
29 for Needy Families (TANF) program, as follows:

30 (a) With respect to denials of applications for
31 benefits, all of the same information about the family required
32 under the federal law, plus the specific reason or reasons for

33 denial of the application.

34 (b) With respect to all terminations of benefits, all
35 of the same information as required under the federal law, plus
36 the specific reason or reasons for the termination.

37 (3) The Department of Human Services shall collect all of
38 the same data as set forth in subsections (1) and (2), and report
39 it on the same schedule, with respect to all cash assistance
40 benefits provided to families that are not funded from the TANF
41 program federal block grant or are not otherwise required to be
42 included in the data collection and reporting in subsections (1)
43 and (2).

44 (4) Whether or not reports under this section must be
45 submitted to the federal government, they shall be considered
46 public and they shall be promptly made available to the public at
47 the end of each fiscal year, free of charge upon request. The
48 data underlying the reports shall be made available to academic
49 institutions and public policy organizations involved in the study
50 of welfare issues or programs and reacted to conform with
51 applicable privacy laws. The cost shall be no more than that
52 incurred by the Department of Human Services in copying and
53 mailing the data.

54 (5) The Legislature and Department of Human Services shall,
55 in addition to the foregoing data collection and reporting
56 activities, seek an institution of higher education to conduct, at
57 no cost to the Department of Human Services, a longitudinal study
58 of the implementation of TANF and related welfare reforms. The
59 study shall select subgroups representing important sectors of the
60 assistance population, including type of area of residence such as
61 city, suburban, small town, rural, English proficiency, level of
62 education, literacy, work experience, number of adults in the
63 home, number of children in the home, teen parenting, and other
64 such subgroups. For each subgroup, the study shall assemble a
65 statistically valid sample of cases entering the TANF program at
66 least six (6) months after its implementation date and before July
67 1, 1999. The study shall continue until December 31, 2005. The
68 Department of Human Services shall report to the Legislature by
69 January 1 of each year, beginning January 1, 2000, on the interim

70 findings of the study with respect to each subgroup, and by March
71 1, 2006, the final findings with respect to each subgroup. The
72 reports shall be available to the public upon request. No later
73 than November 1, 1999, the Department of Human Services, in
74 consultation with an advisory panel of specialists in welfare
75 policy, social science, and other relevant fields shall devise the
76 study and identify the factors to be studied. The study shall, at
77 a minimum, include the following features:

78 (a) Demographic breakdowns including, but not limited
79 to, race, gender, and number of children in the household.

80 (b) The Department of Human Services shall obtain
81 permission to conduct the study from the subjects of the study and
82 guarantee their privacy according to the privacy laws. To
83 facilitate this permission, the study may be designed to refer to
84 subjects by pseudonyms or codes and shall in any event guarantee
85 anonymity to the subjects with limiting access by outsiders to the
86 data, other than identities, generated by the study.

87 (c) The subjects of the study shall be followed after
88 denial or termination of assistance, to the extent feasible. The
89 evaluator shall attempt to maintain personal contact with the
90 subjects of the study, and employ such methods as meetings,
91 telephone contacts, written surveys, and computer matches with
92 other data bases to accomplish this purpose. The intent of this
93 feature of the study is to discover the paths people take after
94 leaving welfare and the patterns of return to welfare, including
95 the factors that may influence these paths and patterns.

96 (d) The study shall examine the influence of various
97 employability, education, and training programs upon employment,
98 earnings, job tenures and cycling between welfare and work.

99 (e) The study shall examine the influence of various
100 supportive services such as child care, including type and cost,
101 transportation, and payment of initial employment expenses upon
102 employment, earnings, job tenure, and cycling between welfare and

103 work.

104 (f) The study shall examine the frequency of unplanned
105 occurrences in subjects' lives, such as illness or injury, family
106 members's illness or injury, car breakdown, strikes, natural
107 disasters, evictions, loss of other sources of income, domestic
108 violence, and crime, and their impact upon employment, earnings,
109 job tenure, and cycling between welfare and work.

110 (g) Including health benefits and what they cost the
111 employee, the study shall examine the wages and other compensation
112 received by subjects who obtain employment, the type and
113 characteristics of jobs, the hours and time of day of work, union
114 status, and the relationships of such factors to earnings, job
115 tenure, and cycling between welfare and work.

116 (h) The study shall examine the reasons for subjects'
117 job loss, the availability of unemployment insurance, the reasons
118 for a subject's return to welfare, programs or services utilized
119 by subjects in the search for another job, the characteristics of
120 the subjects' next job, and the relationships of these factors to
121 reemployment, earnings, job tenure on the new job, and cycling
122 between welfare and work.

123 (i) The study shall examine the impact of mandatory
124 work requirements, including the types of work activities to which
125 the subjects were assigned, and the links between the requirements
126 and the activities and sanctions, employment, earnings, job
127 tenure, and cycling between welfare and work.

128 (j) The study shall identify all sources and amounts of
129 reported household nonwage income and examine the influence of the
130 sources and amounts of nonwage, nonwelfare income on employment,
131 earnings, job tenure, and cycling between welfare and work.

132 (k) The study shall examine sanctions, including child
133 support enforcement and paternity establishment sanctions, the
134 reasons sanctions are threatened, the number threatened, the
135 number imposed, and the reasons sanctions are not imposed or are

136 ended, such as cooperation achieved or good cause established.

137 (1) The study shall track the subjects usage of TANF
138 benefits over the course of the lifetime sixty-month limit of TANF
139 eligibility, including patterns of usage, relationships between
140 consecutive usage of large numbers of months and other factors,
141 status of all study subjects with respect to the time limit as of
142 each report, characteristics of subjects exhausting the
143 eligibility limit, types of exceptions granted to the sixty-month
144 limit, and numbers of cases within each type of exception.

145 (m) The study shall track subjects' participation in
146 other public systems, including the public schools, the child
147 welfare system, the criminal justice system, homeless and food
148 services, and others, and attempt to identify the positive or
149 negative effects in these systems of welfare policies, systems and
150 procedures.

151 (6) The Department of Human Services shall cooperate in any
152 appropriate study by an independent expert of the impact upon
153 Mississippi resident noncitizens of the denial or termination of
154 assistance under the Food Stamps, TANF, Medicaid, and Title XX
155 social services programs pursuant to the changes enacted in the
156 federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
157 Reconciliation Act of 1996. The purposes of such a study must be
158 to examine the immediate and long-term effects on this population
159 and on the state of the denial or termination of these forms of
160 assistance, including the impact on the individuals, the alternate
161 means they fine to obtain support and care, and the impact on
162 state and local spending and human services delivery systems. An
163 appropriate study shall select a statistically valid sample of
164 persons denied or terminated from each type of benefits and
165 attempt to track them until December 31, 2001. Any reports from
166 the study received by the Department of Human services shall be
167 made available to the Legislature upon request, and a final report
168 shall be submitted upon completion. These reports shall be

169 available to the public upon request.

170 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from
171 and after its passage.