

By: Senator(s) Simmons

To: Public Health and
Welfare

SENATE BILL NO. 2556

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE THAT THE Mississippi Department of Human
2 Services SHALL EXTEND ITS CONTRACT WITH MILLSAPS COLLEGE TO
3 COLLECT DATA REGARDING TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES
4 (TANF) RECIPIENTS IN CERTAIN COUNTIES, AND TO USE THE DATA FROM
5 THOSE COUNTIES IN PREPARING ITS STUDY AND EVALUATION OF THE TANF
6 WORK PROGRAM PURSUANT TO THE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND
7 MILLSAPS COLLEGE; TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
8 SERVICES TO COLLECT CERTAIN DATA REGARDING THE PERSONAL
9 RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK OPPORTUNITY RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996 AND
10 TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) AND MAKE SUCH
11 INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC; TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI
12 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO COOPERATE IN ANY STUDY FUNDED BY A
13 STATE, COUNTY OR MUNICIPAL BODY, AND CONDUCTED BY AN INDEPENDENT
14 EXPERT THAT CONCERNS THE IMPACT UPON MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT ALIENS
15 OF THE DENIAL OR TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE UNDER CERTAIN FEDERAL
16 WELFARE PROGRAMS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

18 SECTION 1. (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services
19 is hereby authorized to extend its contract with Millsaps College
20 entered into in 1997 to study and evaluate the Temporary
21 Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work program as follows:

22 Millsaps College shall conduct a longitudinal study of the
23 implementation of TANF and related welfare reforms. The research
24 group shall consist of experienced researchers in welfare policy,
25 social science and other relevant fields. The study shall include
26 the following urban counties: DeSoto, Forrest, Harrison, Hinds,
27 Jackson, Lauderdale, Lee and Washington, and shall include the
28 following rural counties: Bolivar, Clay, Holmes, Jefferson,
29 Jefferson Davis, Marshall, Noxubee, Perry, Quitman, Sharkey and
30 Wilkinson. The study shall select subgroups representing
31 important sectors of the assistance population, including type of
32 area of residence (city, suburban, small town, rural, region),
33 level of education, literacy, work experience, number of adults in

34 the home, number and age of children in the home, teen parentage,
35 English proficiency, where relevant, and other such subgroups
36 chosen by the institution. For each subgroup, the study shall
37 assemble a statistically valid sample of TANF cases enrolled prior
38 to October 1, 1997. The study shall continue until December 31,
39 2002, and in the event this section is reenacted, the study shall
40 continue until December 31, 2004. The Mississippi Department of
41 Human Services and Millsaps College shall obtain permission to
42 conduct the study from the subjects of the study and guarantee
43 their privacy according to applicable privacy laws. To facilitate
44 this permission, the study may be designed to refer to subjects by
45 pseudonyms or codes and shall, in any event, guarantee anonymity
46 to the subjects with limited access by outsiders to the data
47 (other than identities) generated by the study. Millsaps College
48 shall report the interim findings of the study with respect to
49 each subgroup, to the Legislature by August 31 of each year,
50 beginning August 31, 2000, and in the event this section is
51 reenacted, shall report the final findings with respect to each
52 subgroup by March 31, 2005. The reports shall be available to the
53 public upon request.

54 (2) Millsaps College shall devise the study and identify the
55 factors to be studied by not later than August 31, 1999. The
56 study shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

57 (a) The study shall include demographic breakdowns
58 including, but not limited to, race, gender, age and number of
59 children in the household.

60 (b) The subjects of the study shall be followed after
61 denial or termination of assistance, to the extent feasible. The
62 evaluator shall attempt to maintain personal contact with the
63 subjects of the study, and employ such methods as meetings,
64 telephone contacts, written surveys and computer matches with
65 other data bases to accomplish this purpose. The intent of this
66 feature of the study is to discover the paths people take after
67 leaving welfare and the patterns of return to welfare, including
68 the factors that may influence these paths and patterns.

69 (c) The study shall examine the influence of various
70 employability, education and training programs upon employment,

71 earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work
72 (repeated application for welfare between periods of employment).

73 (d) The study shall examine the influence of various
74 supportive services such as child care (including type and cost),
75 transportation and payment of initial employment expenses upon
76 employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and
77 work.

78 (e) The study shall examine the influence of government
79 benefits that are authorized by TANF to be received by subjects
80 after they have been employed upon employment, earnings, job
81 tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

82 (f) The study shall examine the frequency of unplanned
83 occurrences in subjects' lives, such as illness or injury, family
84 members' illness or injury, car breakdown, strikes, natural
85 disasters, evictions, loss of other sources of income, domestic
86 violence and crime, and their impact upon employment, earnings,
87 job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

88 (g) The study shall examine the wages and other
89 compensation, including health benefits and what they cost the
90 employee, received by subjects who obtain employment, the type and
91 characteristics of jobs, the hours and time of day of work, union
92 status and the relationships of such factors to earnings, job
93 tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

94 (h) The study shall examine the reasons for subjects'
95 job loss, the availability of unemployment insurance, the reasons
96 for a subject's return to welfare, programs or services utilized
97 by subjects in the search for another job, the characteristics of
98 the subjects' next job and the relationships of these factors to
99 re-employment, earnings, job tenure on the new job and cycling
100 between welfare and work.

101 (i) The study shall examine the impact of mandatory
102 work requirements, including the types of work activities to which
103 the subjects were assigned, and the links between the requirements

104 and the activities and sanctions, employment, earnings, job tenure
105 and cycling between welfare and work.

106 (j) The study shall identify all sources and amounts of
107 reported household non-wage income and examine the influence of
108 the sources and amounts of non-wage, non-welfare income on
109 employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and
110 work.

111 (k) The study shall examine sanctions, including child
112 support enforcement and paternity establishment, the reasons
113 sanctions are threatened, the number threatened, the number
114 imposed and the reasons sanctions are not imposed or are ended,
115 such as cooperation achieved or good cause established.

116 (l) The study shall track the subjects' usage of TANF
117 benefits over the course of the lifetime sixty-month limit of TANF
118 eligibility, including patterns of usage, relationships between
119 consecutive usage of large numbers of months and other factors,
120 status of all study subjects with respect to the time limit as of
121 each report, characteristics of subjects exhausting the
122 eligibility limit, types of exceptions granted to the sixty-month
123 limit and numbers of cases within each type of exception.

124 (m) The study shall track subjects' participation in
125 other public systems, including the public schools, the child
126 welfare system, the criminal justice system, homeless and food
127 services and others, and attempt to identify the positive or
128 negative ripple effects in these systems of welfare policies,
129 systems and procedures.

130 (n) The study shall examine the impact of the TANF
131 program on the local economy and on other state agencies.

132 (3) The study authorized by this section shall only be
133 funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services from the
134 TANF program federal block grant not to exceed Three Hundred Fifty
135 Thousand Dollars (\$350,000.00) annually.

136 (4) All data, statistics, computer software and reports made

137 under this section shall be considered public records and the
138 property of the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

139 SECTION 2. (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services
140 shall collect and report upon all data in connection with
141 federally funded or assisted welfare programs as federal law may
142 require, including, but not limited to, Section 411 of the
143 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of
144 1996 and its implementing regulations and any amendments thereto
145 as may from time to time be enacted. Such data shall be made
146 available to the public within one (1) week after it has been sent
147 to the United States Department of Health and Human Services at
148 each regional office of the Mississippi Department of Human
149 Services.

150 (2) On the same schedule as the data collection required by
151 federal law and subsection (1) of this section, the Mississippi
152 Department of Human Services shall collect and report additional
153 information with respect to the Temporary Assistance for Needy
154 Families ("TANF") program, as follows:

155 (a) With respect to denials of applications for
156 benefits, all of the information about the family as required
157 under federal law, plus the specific reason or reasons for denial
158 of the application.

159 (b) With respect to all terminations of benefits, all
160 of the information as required under federal law, plus the
161 specific reason or reasons for the termination or sanction.

162 (3) The Mississippi Department of Human Services shall
163 collect all of the data as set forth in subsections (1) and (2) of
164 this section on all cash assistance benefits provided to TANF
165 recipients that are not funded from the TANF program federal block
166 grant or are not otherwise required to be included in the data
167 collection and reporting provided for in subsections (1) and (2)
168 of this section, and shall report such information on the same
169 schedule as is required for the information collected in

170 subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

171 (4) Reports made under this section shall be considered
172 public records and shall promptly be made available to the public
173 upon request at the end of each fiscal year at a reasonable cost
174 directly related to the cost of copying and mailing the reports.
175 The data underlying the reports shall be made available to
176 academic institutions and public policy organizations involved in
177 the study of welfare issues or programs after any reductions made
178 to conform with applicable privacy laws. The data shall be
179 provided by the Mississippi Department of Human Services at a
180 reasonable cost directly related to the cost of copying and
181 mailing the data.

182 (5) No later than July 1, 1999, the Mississippi Department
183 of Human Services shall appoint seven (7) persons to an advisory
184 panel. Four (4) panel members shall be experienced researchers in
185 welfare policy, social science and other related fields from
186 institutions of higher learning located in the Delta, northeast,
187 southwest, southern or urban areas of Mississippi, one (1) member
188 shall be a representative of the business community, one (1)
189 member shall be a current or former welfare recipient, and one (1)
190 member shall be representative of a nonprofit human service
191 organization. The role of the advisory panel is to ensure input
192 from all sectors in the development of the research design and
193 during the research process. Its role is advisory in nature and
194 it is not empowered to direct the research effort or to specify
195 results. The advisory panel shall have the following
196 responsibilities:

197 (a) To advise researchers with regard to availability
198 of data pertaining to elements to be studied according to
199 legislation;

200 (b) To play a consulting role in reviewing and reacting
201 to the overall research design of the study;

202 (c) To review interim and final reports of the research

203 team; and

204 (d) To review and advise researchers on policy
205 recommendations emanating from the research process.

206 Analysis and interpretation of data gathered under the
207 guidance of the research design and based upon the specifics
208 delineated by the legislation shall be solely the responsibility
209 of Millsaps College.

210 SECTION 3. The Mississippi Department of Human Services
211 shall cooperate in any study funded by a federal, state, county or
212 municipal body, and conducted by an independent expert, concerning
213 the impact upon Mississippi residents of the denial or termination
214 of assistance under the Food Stamps, TANF, Medicaid and Title XX
215 social services programs pursuant to the changes enacted in the
216 federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
217 Reconciliation Act of 1996. The purpose of such a study must be
218 to examine the immediate and long-term effects on this population
219 and on the state of the denial or termination of these forms of
220 assistance, including the impact on the individuals, the alternate
221 means they find to obtain support and care, and the impact on
222 state and local spending and human services delivery systems.
223 Such a study shall select a statistically valid sample of persons
224 denied or terminated from each type of benefit and attempt to
225 track them at least until July 31, 2000. Any reports from studies
226 conducted with the cooperation of the Mississippi Department of
227 Human Services shall be made available to the Legislature upon
228 request, and a final report shall be submitted upon completion.
229 These reports shall be available to the public upon request.

230 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from
231 and after July 1, 1999; and shall stand repealed from and after
232 December 31, 2002.