

By: Scott (17th), Thomas

To: Education;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 197

1 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO IMPLEMENT
2 A FULL DAY VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR
3 FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN CERTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITH SERVICES
4 PROVIDED THROUGH THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, HEAD START OR
5 OTHER CHILD DAYCARE PROGRAMS; TO ESTABLISH CERTAIN CRITERIA FOR
6 THE PROGRAM; TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH
7 AN APPLICATION PROCESS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS DESIRING TO
8 PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM; TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF
9 EDUCATION TO USE AVAILABLE FUNDING FOR GRANTS TO PARTICIPATING
10 SCHOOL DISTRICTS; TO ESTABLISH A PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM
11 FUND; TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO RECOMMEND TO THE
12 LEGISLATURE WHETHER OR NOT THE PROGRAM SHOULD BE PERMANENTLY
13 ESTABLISHED; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

15 SECTION 1. (1) As used in this section, the term
16 "four-year-old" means any child who is four (4) years of age on or
17 before September 1.

18 (2) To ensure that all four-year-olds have access to quality
19 educational services, the Legislature finds and declares the
20 following:

21 (a) Parents have the primary duty to educate their
22 young preschool children.

23 (b) The State of Mississippi can assist parents in
24 their role as the primary caregivers and educators by providing
25 services for a full-day prekindergarten program that addresses
26 instructional, social and emotional needs for four-year-old
27 children.

28 (3) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the
29 Department of Human Services, shall develop and implement a
30 voluntary program to provide services for a full-day
31 prekindergarten program that addresses the cognitive, social and

32 emotional needs of four-year-old children, subject to the
33 following conditions and provisions:

34 (a) Participation in the program must be voluntary on
35 the part of the four-year-old child's parent, guardian or
36 custodian.

37 (b) The State Board of Education, the Department of
38 Human Services, the State Board of Health, the Mississippi Head
39 Start Association and the public and private daycare centers
40 jointly shall develop criteria for the following: (i) enrollment
41 of four-year-old children who have predicted significant readiness
42 deficiencies; (ii) qualifications of personnel employed to serve
43 the children; (iii) teacher-student ratio; (iv) health and safety
44 standards; (v) hours of operation of the programs; and (vi)
45 provisions for the transportation of the four-year-old children.

46 (c) The core curriculum of all four-year-old programs
47 must meet or exceed the State Department of Education's
48 prekindergarten curriculum benchmarks. The curriculum must
49 encompass language development, mathematics language development,
50 math concepts, social and emotional development and physical
51 development (fine, gross, sensory motor development).

52 (d) To ensure coordination, participating school
53 districts shall review available educational resources, programs
54 and services in order to avoid duplication of public services.

55 (e) The State Board of Education shall determine a
56 process for interested school districts to apply for grant funds
57 in order to participate in the four-year-old program. Beginning
58 in fiscal year 2001, the State Board of Education shall award
59 grants for at least one (1) program in each Mississippi
60 congressional district, subject to a maximum of twenty-five (25)
61 programs throughout the state, and in subsequent years, may award
62 additional program grants subject to the availability of funds
63 specifically appropriated therefor by the Legislature. These
64 programs shall be awarded to targeted school districts that are
65 most in need of an instructional program for four-year-old
66 children who have predicted significant readiness deficiencies.
67 The State Department of Education annually will determine a
68 cost-per-child rate that shall be used in funding a targeted

69 program and shall collaborate with the Department of Human
70 Services in the determination of fair market rates for subsidized
71 child care. The targeted districts will be responsible for
72 blending services for children to avoid duplication in the areas
73 of transportation, personnel, training of personnel, facilities
74 and child nutrition.

75 (4) The Prekindergarten Education Program Fund is
76 established. Funds made available by the Legislature for the
77 support and maintenance of full-day prekindergarten education
78 programs authorized under this section shall be deposited into the
79 fund.

80 (5) The State Board of Education shall report to the
81 Legislature on July 1, 2001, and annually thereafter, on the
82 desirability of expanding and permanently establishing the
83 program.

84 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
85 and after July 1, 2000.