

By: Simmons

To: Public Health and
Welfare

SENATE BILL NO. 2130
(As Passed the Senate)

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES SHALL
2 COLLECT AND REPORT UPON ALL DATA IN CONNECTION WITH FEDERALLY
3 FUNDED OR ASSISTED WELFARE PROGRAMS AS FEDERAL LAW MAY REQUIRE,
4 INCLUDING SECTION 411 OF THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK
5 OPPORTUNITY RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996 AND TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE
6 FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) AND MAKE SUCH INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO
7 THE PUBLIC; TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO CONTRACT
8 WITH THE WELFARE POLICY INSTITUTE TO CONDUCT A LONGITUDINAL STUDY
9 OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TANF; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

11 SECTION 1. (1) The Department of Human Services shall
12 collect and report upon all data in connection with federally
13 funded or assisted welfare programs as federal law may require,
14 including, but not limited to, Section 411 of the Personal
15 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and
16 its implementing regulations and any amendments thereto as may
17 from time to time be enacted. Such data shall be made available
18 to the public within a week after it has been sent to the U.S.
19 Department of Health and Human Services at each regional office of
20 the Department of Human Services or at the Department of Human
21 Services website.

22 (2) In addition to and on the same schedule as the data
23 collection required by federal law and subsection (a), the
24 Department of Human Services is hereby authorized to contract with
25 the Institution of Higher Learning Welfare Policy Institute to
26 conduct a longitudinal study of the implementation of TANF and
27 related welfare reforms with respect to the Temporary Assistance
28 for Needy Families (TANF) work program as follows:

29 (a) With respect to denials of applications for

30 benefits, all of the same information about the family required
31 under the federal law, plus the specific reason or reasons for
32 denial of the application.

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

36 Whether or not reports under this section must be submitted
37 to the federal government, they shall be considered public and
38 they shall be promptly made available to the public at the end of
39 each fiscal year, free of charge upon request. All data
40 underlying the past and present reports shall be made available to
41 academic institutions and public policy organizations involved in
42 the study of welfare issues or programs in ways that conform with
43 applicable privacy laws. The cost shall be no more than that
44 incurred by the Department of Human Services in copying and
45 mailing the data.

46 The Welfare policy Institute shall select/invite qualified
47 researchers from public and private universities to participate in
48 the study. This study may be funded by federal and/or state
49 dollars. The study shall select samples representative of the
50 assistance population, taking into account the length of time
51 receiving TANF/AFDC benefits, type of area of residence (city,
52 suburban, small town, rural), level of education, literacy, work
53 experience, number of adults in the home, number and age of
54 children in the home, teen parentage, English proficiency where
55 relevant and other such subgroups chosen by the institution. The
56 study shall assemble a statistically valid sample of cases
57 sanctioned off or enrolled in the TANF program prior to or on
58 October 1 of each year, beginning with 1998 and tracking these
59 groups over time.

60 (c) The Welfare Policy Institute shall devise the study
61 and identify the factors to be studied by not later than August
62 31, 2000. The study shall include, but not be limited to, the

63 following:

64 (i) The study shall include demographic breakdowns
65 including, but not limited to, race, gender, age and number of
66 children in the household.

67 (ii) The subjects of the study shall be followed
68 after denial or termination of assistance, to the extent feasible.
69 The evaluator shall attempt to maintain personal contact with the
70 subjects of the study, and employ such methods as meetings,
71 telephone contacts, written surveys and computer matches with
72 other databases to accomplish this purpose. The intent of this
73 feature of the study is to discover the paths people take after
74 leaving welfare and the patterns of return to welfare, including
75 the factors that may influence these paths and patterns.

76 (iii) The study shall examine the influence of
77 various employability, education and training programs upon
78 employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and
79 work (repeated application for welfare between periods of
80 employment).

81 (iv) The study shall examine the influence of
82 various supportive services such as child care (including type and
83 cost), transportation and payment of initial employment expenses
84 upon employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare
85 and work.

86 (v) The study shall examine the influence of
87 government benefits that are authorized by TANF to be received by
88 subjects after they have been employed upon employment, earnings,
89 job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

90 (vi) The study shall examine the frequency of
91 unplanned occurrences in subjects' lives, such as illness or
92 injury, family members' illness or injury, car breakdown, strikes,
93 natural disasters, evictions, loss of other sources of income,
94 domestic violence and crime, and their impact upon employment,
95 earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

96 (vii) The study shall examine the wages and other
97 compensation, including health benefits and what they cost the
98 employee, received by subjects who obtain employment, the type and
99 characteristics of jobs, the hours and time of day of work, union
100 status and the relationships of such factors to earnings, job
101 tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

102 (viii) The study shall examine the reasons for
103 subjects' job loss, the availability of unemployment insurance,
104 the reasons for a subject's return to welfare, programs or
105 services utilized by subjects in the search for another job, the
106 characteristics of the subjects' next job and the relationships of
107 these factors to re-employment, earnings, job tenure on the new
108 job and cycling between welfare and work.

109 (ix) The study shall examine the impact of
110 mandatory work requirements, including the types of work
111 activities to which the subjects were assigned, and the links
112 between the requirements and the activities and sanctions,
113 employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and
114 work.

115 (x) The study shall identify all sources and
116 amounts of reported household nonwage income and examine the
117 influence of the sources and amounts of nonwage, nonwelfare income
118 on employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare
119 and work.

120 (xi) The study shall examine sanctions, including
121 child support enforcement and paternity establishment, the reasons
122 sanctions are threatened, the number threatened, the number
123 imposed and the reasons sanctions are not imposed or are ended,
124 such as cooperation achieved or good cause established.

125 (xii) The study shall track the subjects' usage of
126 TANF benefits over the course of the lifetime sixty-month limit of
127 TANF eligibility, including patterns of usage, relationships
128 between consecutive usage of large numbers of months and other

129 factors, status of all study subjects with respect to the time
130 limit as of each report, characteristics of subjects exhausting
131 the eligibility limit, types of exceptions granted to the
132 sixty-month limit and numbers of cases within each type of
133 exception.

134 (xiii) The study shall track the subjects'
135 participation in other public systems, including the public
136 schools, the child welfare system, the criminal justice system,
137 homeless and food services and others, and attempt to identify the
138 positive or negative ripple effects in these systems of welfare
139 policies, systems and procedures.

140 (xiv) The study shall examine the impact of the
141 TANF program on the local economy and on other state agencies.

142 (d) The study authorized by this section shall only be
143 funded by the Department of Human Services from the TANF program
144 federal block grant not to exceed Three Hundred Fifty Thousand
145 Dollars (\$350,000.00) annually.

146 (e) All data, statistics, computer software and reports
147 made under this section shall be considered public records and the
148 property of the Department of Human Services.

149 SECTION 2. (1) The Department of Human Services shall
150 collect and report upon all data in connection with federally
151 funded or assisted welfare programs as federal law may require,
152 including, but not limited to, Section 411 of the Personal
153 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and
154 its implementing regulations and any amendments thereto as may
155 from time to time be enacted. Such data shall be made available
156 to the public within one (1) week after it has been sent to the
157 United States Department of Health and Human Services at each
158 regional office of the Department of Human Services.

159 (2) On the same schedule as the data collection required by
160 federal law and subsection (1) of this section, the Department of
161 Human Services shall collect and report additional information

162 with respect to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
163 program, as follows:

164 (a) With respect to denials of applications for
165 benefits, all of the information about the family as required
166 under federal law, plus the specific reason or reasons for denial
167 of the application.

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

171 (3) The Department of Human Services shall collect all of
172 the data as set forth in subsections (1) and (2) of this section
173 on all cash assistance benefits provided to TANF recipients that
174 are not funded from the TANF program federal block grant or are
175 not otherwise required to be included in the data collection and
176 reporting provided for in subsections (1) and (2) of this section,
177 and shall report such information on the same schedule as is
178 required for the information collected in subsections (1) and (2)
179 of this section.

180 (4) Reports made under this section shall be considered
181 public records and shall promptly be made available to the public
182 upon request at the end of each fiscal year at a reasonable cost
183 directly related to the cost of copying and mailing the reports.
184 The data underlying the reports shall be made available to
185 academic institutions and public policy organizations involved in
186 the study of welfare issues or programs after any reductions made
187 to conform with applicable privacy laws. The data shall be
188 provided by the Department of Human Services at a reasonable cost
189 directly related to the cost of copying and mailing the data.

190 (5) No later than July 1, 2000, the Department of Human
191 Services shall appoint seven (7) persons to an advisory panel.
192 Four (4) panel members shall be experienced researchers in welfare
193 policy, social science and other related fields from institutions
194 of higher learning located in the Delta, northeast, southwest,

195 southern or urban areas of Mississippi, one (1) member shall be a
196 representative of the business community, one (1) member shall be
197 a current or former welfare recipient, and one (1) member shall be
198 representative of a nonprofit human service organization. The
199 role of the advisory panel is to ensure input from all sectors in
200 the development of the research design and during the research
201 process. Its role is advisory in nature and it is not empowered
202 to direct the research effort or to specify results. The advisory
203 panel shall have the following responsibilities:

204 (a) To advise researchers with regard to availability
205 of data pertaining to elements to be studied according to
206 legislation;

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

209 (c) To review interim and final reports of the research
210 team; and

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

213 Analysis and interpretation of data gathered under the
214 guidance of the research design and based upon the specifics
215 delineated by the legislation shall be solely the responsibility
216 of the Institution of Higher Learning Welfare Policy Institute.

217 SECTION 3. The Department of Human Services shall cooperate
218 in any study funded by a federal, state, county or municipal body,
219 and conducted by an independent expert, concerning the impact upon
220 Mississippi residents of the denial or termination of assistance
221 under the Food Stamps, TANF, Medicaid and Title XX social services
222 programs pursuant to the changes enacted in the federal Personal
223 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996.
224 The purpose of such a study must be to examine the immediate and
225 long-term effects on this population and on the state of the
226 denial or termination of these forms of assistance, including the
227 impact on the individuals, the alternate means they find to obtain

228 support and care, and the impact on state and local spending and
229 human services delivery systems. Such a study shall select a
230 statistically valid sample of persons denied or terminated from
231 each type of benefit and attempt to track them at least until July
232 31, 2002. Any reports from studies conducted with the cooperation
233 of the Department of Human Services shall be made available to the
234 Legislature upon request, and a final report shall be submitted
235 upon completion. These reports shall be available to the public
236 upon request.

237 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from
238 and after its passage; and shall stand repealed from and after
239 July 1, 2003.