MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE

By: Smith

To: Public Health and Welfare; Judiciary

## SENATE BILL NO. 2511

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-17-5, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, 2 TO DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO REQUEST NECESSARY 3 WAIVERS TO IMPLEMENT A CHILD DEVELOPMENT TRUST FUND PILOT PROGRAM 4 FOR CHILDREN IN FAMILIES RECEIVING TANF ASSISTANCE WHO ARE 5 SUBJECTED TO ABUSE OR NEGLECT, AND WHERE A FAMILY MEMBER HAS BEEN 6 CONVICTED OF CERTAIN FELONIES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:
8 SECTION 1. Section 43-17-5, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
9 amended as follows: [RDD1]

10 43-17-5. (1) The amount of Temporary Assistance for Needy 11 Families (TANF) benefits which may be granted for any dependent child and a needy caretaker relative shall be determined by the 12 13 county department with due regard to the resources and necessary 14 expenditures of the family and the conditions existing in each 15 case, and in accordance with the rules and regulations made by the 16 Department of Human Services which shall not be less than the Standard of Need in effect for 1988, and shall be sufficient when 17 added to all other income (except that any income specified in the 18 federal Social Security Act, as amended, may be disregarded) and 19 20 support available to the child to provide such child with a 21 reasonable subsistence compatible with decency and health. The 22 first family member in the dependent child's budget may receive an amount not to exceed One Hundred Ten Dollars (\$110.00) per month; 23

24 the second family member in the dependent child's budget may receive an amount not to exceed Thirty-six Dollars (\$36.00) per 25 month; and each additional family member in the dependent child's 26 27 budget an amount not to exceed Twenty-four Dollars (\$24.00) per month. The maximum for any individual family member in the 28 29 dependent child's budget may be exceeded for foster or medical 30 care or in cases of mentally retarded or physically handicapped children. TANF benefits granted shall be specifically limited 31 32 only (a) to children existing or conceived at the time the caretaker relative initially applies and qualifies for such 33 assistance, unless this limitation is specifically waived by the 34 department, or (b) to a child born following a twelve (12) 35 36 consecutive month period of discontinued benefits by the caretaker 37 relative.

38 (2) TANF cash benefits in Mississippi shall be provided by
39 monthly checks mailed to the recipient family until such time as
40 an on-line electronic benefits transfer system for TANF benefit
41 payments is implemented pursuant to Section 43-1-28.

42 (3) The Department of Human Services shall deny TANF 43 benefits to the following categories of individuals, except for 44 individuals and families specifically exempt or excluded for good 45 cause as allowed by federal statute or regulation:

46 (a) Families without a minor child residing with the47 custodial parent or other adult caretaker relative of the child;

(b) Families which include an adult who has received TANF assistance for sixty (60) months after the commencement of the Mississippi TANF program, whether or not such period of time is consecutive;

52 (c) Families not assigning to the state any rights a 53 family member may have, on behalf of the family member or of any 54 other person for whom the family member has applied for or is

55 receiving such assistance, to support from any other person, as 56 required by law;

57 (d) Families who fail to cooperate in establishing58 paternity or obtaining child support, as required by law;

59 (e) Any individual who has not attained eighteen (18) years of age, is not married to the head of household, has a minor 60 child at least twelve (12) weeks of age in his or her care, and 61 has not successfully completed a high school education or its 62 equivalent, if such individual does not participate in educational 63 64 activities directed toward the attainment of a high school diploma 65 or its equivalent, or an alternative educational or training 66 program approved by the department;

(f) Any individual who has not attained eighteen (18) years of age, is not married, has a minor child in his or her care, and does not reside in a place or residence maintained by a parent, legal guardian or other adult relative or the individual as such parent's, guardian's or adult relative's own home;

(g) Any minor child who has been, or is expected by a parent or other caretaker relative of the child to be, absent from the home for a period of more than thirty (30) days;

(h) Any individual who is a parent or other caretaker relative of a minor child who fails to notify the department of the absence of the minor child from the home for the thirty-day period specified in paragraph (g), by the end of the five-day period that begins with the date that it becomes clear to the individual that the minor child will be absent for the thirty-day period;

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(i) Any individual who fails to comply with the

83 provisions of the Employability Development Plan signed by the 84 individual which prescribe those activities designed to help the 85 individual become and remain employed, or to participate 86 satisfactorily in the assigned work activity, as authorized under 87 subsection (6)(c);

(j) A parent or caretaker relative who has not engaged in an allowable work activity once the department determines the parent or caretaker relative is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker relative has received TANF assistance under the program for twenty-four (24) months, whether or not consecutive, whichever is earlier;

94 (k) Any individual who is fleeing to avoid prosecution, 95 or custody or confinement after conviction, under the laws of the 96 jurisdiction from which the individual flees, for a crime, or an 97 attempt to commit a crime, which is a felony under the laws of the 98 place from which the individual flees, or who is violating a 99 condition of probation or parole imposed under federal or state 100 law;

(1) Aliens who are not qualified under federal law; 101 102 (m) For a period of ten (10) years following conviction, individuals convicted in federal or state court of 103 104 having made a fraudulent statement or representation with respect 105 to the individual's place of residence in order to receive TANF, 106 food stamps or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) assistance under 107 Title XVI or Title XIX simultaneously from two (2) or more states; 108 and

109 (n) Individuals who are recipients of federal110 Supplemental Security Income (SSI) assistance.

(4) (a) Any person who is otherwise eligible for TANF benefits, including custodial and noncustodial parents, shall be required to attend school and meet the monthly attendance requirement as provided in this subsection if all of the following apply:

(i) The person is under age twenty (20); (ii) The person has not graduated from a public or private high school or obtained a GED equivalent;

(iii) The person is physically able to attend school and is not excused from attending school; and

(iv) If the person is a parent or caretaker relative with whom a dependent child is living, child care is available for the child.

The monthly attendance requirement under this subsection 124 125 shall be attendance at the school in which the person is enrolled 126 for each day during a month that the school conducts classes in 127 which the person is enrolled, with not more than two (2) absences 128 during the month for reasons other than the reasons listed in paragraph (e) (iv) of this subsection. Persons who fail to meet 129 130 participation requirements in this subsection shall be subject to 131 sanctions as provided in paragraph (f) of this subsection.

(b) As used in this subsection, "school" means any one(1) of the following:

134 (i) A school as defined in Section 37-13-91(2); 135 (ii) A vocational, technical and adult education 136 program; or

137 (iii) A course of study meeting the standards138 established by the State Department of Education for the granting

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of a declaration of equivalency of high school graduation.

140 (c) If any compulsory-school-age child, as defined in Section 37-13-91(2), to which TANF eligibility requirements apply 141 142 is not in compliance with the compulsory school attendance requirements of Section 37-13-91(6), the superintendent of schools 143 of the school district in which the child is enrolled or eligible 144 145 to attend shall notify the county department of human services of the child's noncompliance. The Department of Human Services shall 146 147 review school attendance information as provided under this 148 paragraph at all initial eligibility determinations and upon 149 subsequent report of unsatisfactory attendance.

150 (d) The signature of a person on an application for 151 TANF benefits constitutes permission for the release of school 152 attendance records for that person or for any child residing with 153 that person. The department shall request information from the child's school district about the child's attendance in the school 154 155 district's most recently completed semester of attendance. If 156 information about the child's previous school attendance is not available or cannot be verified, the department shall require the 157 158 child to meet the monthly attendance requirement for one (1) 159 semester or until the information is obtained. The department 160 shall use the attendance information provided by a school district 161 to verify attendance for a child. The department shall review 162 with the parent or caretaker relative a child's claim that he or 163 she has a good cause for not attending school.

A school district shall provide information to the department about the attendance of a child who is enrolled in a public school in the district within five (5) working days of the

167 receipt of a written request for such information from the 168 department. The school district shall define how many hours of 169 attendance count as a full day and shall provide that information, 170 upon request, to the department. In reporting attendance, the 171 school district may add partial days' absence together to 172 constitute a full day's absence.

(e) A child who is required to attend school to meet the requirements under this subsection shall comply except when there is good cause, which shall be demonstrated by any of the following circumstances:

177 (i) The minor parent is the caretaker of a child178 less than twelve (12) weeks old; or

(ii) The department determines that child care services are necessary for the minor parent to attend school and there is no child care available; or

(iii) The child is prohibited by the school
district from attending school and an expulsion is pending. This
exemption no longer applies once the teenager has been expelled;
however, a teenager who has been expelled and is making
satisfactory progress towards obtaining a GED equivalent shall be
eliqible for TANF benefits; or

188 (iv) The child failed to attend school for one or 189 more of the following reasons:

1. Illness, injury or incapacity of the child
 or the minor parent's child;

1921922. Court-required appearances or temporary193 incarceration;

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3. Medical or dental appointments for the

195 child or minor parent's child;

196 4. Death of a close relative; 197 5. Observance of a religious holiday; 198 б. Family emergency; Breakdown in transportation; 199 7. 200 8. Suspension; or Any other circumstance beyond the control 201 9. 202 of the child, as defined in regulations of the department. 203 (f) Upon determination that a child has failed without 204 good cause to attend school as required, the department shall 205 provide written notice to the parent or caretaker relative 206 (whoever is the primary recipient of the TANF benefits) that 207 specifies: 208 That the family will be sanctioned in the next (i) 209 possible payment month because the child who is required to attend 210 school has failed to meet the attendance requirement of this 211 subsection; 212 (ii) The beginning date of the sanction, and the child to whom the sanction applies; 213 214 (iii) The right of the child's parents or caretaker relative (whoever is the primary recipient of the TANF 215 216 benefits) to request a fair hearing under this subsection. 217 The child's parent or caretaker relative (whoever is the 218 primary recipient of the TANF benefits) may request a fair hearing 219 on the department's determination that the child has not been attending school. If the child's parents or caretaker relative 220 221 does not request a fair hearing under this subsection, or if, 222 after a fair hearing has been held, the hearing officer finds that

223 the child without good cause has failed to meet the monthly 224 attendance requirement, the department shall discontinue or deny 225 TANF benefits to the child thirteen (13) years old, or older, in 226 the next possible payment month. The department shall discontinue 227 or deny twenty-five percent (25%) of the family grant when a child 228 six (6) through twelve (12) years of age without good cause has 229 failed to meet the monthly attendance requirement. Both the child 230 and family sanction may apply when children in both age groups 231 fail to meet the attendance requirement without good cause. A 232 sanction applied under this subsection shall be effective for one 233 (1) month for each month that the child failed to meet the monthly 234 attendance requirement. In the case of a dropout, the sanction 235 shall remain in force until the parent or caretaker relative 236 provides written proof from the school district that the child has 237 reenrolled and met the monthly attendance requirement for one (1) calendar month. Any month in which school is in session for at 238 239 least ten (10) days during the month may be used to meet the 240 attendance requirement under this subsection. This includes attendance at summer school. The sanction shall be removed the 241 242 next possible payment month.

All parents or caretaker relatives shall have their 243 (5) 244 dependent children receive vaccinations and booster vaccinations 245 against those diseases specified by the State Health Officer 246 pursuant to Section 41-23-37 in accordance with the vaccination 247 and booster vaccination schedule prescribed by the State Health 248 Officer for children of that age, in order for the parents or 249 caretaker relatives to be eligible or remain eligible to receive 250 TANF benefits. Proof of having received such vaccinations and

251 booster vaccinations shall be given by presenting the certificates 252 of vaccination issued by any health care provider licensed to 253 administer vaccinations, and submitted on forms specified by the 254 State Board of Health. If the parents without good cause do not 255 have their dependent children receive the vaccinations and booster 256 vaccinations as required by this subsection and they fail to comply after thirty (30) days' notice, the department shall 257 258 sanction the family's TANF benefits by twenty-five percent (25%) 259 for the next payment month and each subsequent payment month until 260 the requirements of this subsection are met.

261 (6) (a) If the parent or caretaker relative applying for 262 TANF assistance is an employable person, as determined by the Department of Human Services, the person shall be required to 263 264 engage in an allowable work activity once the department 265 determines the parent or caretaker relative is ready to engage in work, or once the parent or caretaker relative has received TANF 266 267 assistance under the program for twenty-four (24) months, whether or not consecutive, whichever is earlier. No TANF benefits shall 268 269 be given to any person to whom this section applies who fails 270 without good cause to comply with the Employability Development 271 Plan prepared by the department for the person, or who has refused 272 to accept a referral or offer of employment, training or education 273 in which he or she is able to engage, subject to the penalties 274 prescribed in subsection (6)(d). A person shall be deemed to have 275 refused to accept a referral or offer of employment, training or 276 education if he or she:

277 (i) Willfully fails to report for an interview278 with respect to employment when requested to do so by the

279 department; or

280 (ii) Willfully fails to report to the department 281 the result of a referral to employment; or 282 (iii) Willfully fails to report for allowable work 283 activities as prescribed in subsection (6)(c). 284 (b) The Department of Human Services shall operate a statewide work program for TANF recipients to provide work 285 286 activities and supportive services to enable families to become 287 self-sufficient and improve their competitive position in the work 288 force in accordance with the requirements of the federal Personal 289 Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 290 (Public Law 104-193), as amended, and the regulations promulgated 291 thereunder. All adults who are not specifically exempt shall be referred by the department for allowable work activities. 292 An 293 adult may be exempt from the mandatory work activity requirement 294 for the following reasons: 295 (i) Incapacity; 296 (ii) Temporary illness or injury, verified by physician's certificate; 297 298 (iii) Is in the third trimester of pregnancy, 299 verified by physician's certificate; 300 (iv) Caretaker of a child under twelve (12) 301 months, for not more than twelve (12) months of the sixty-month 302 maximum benefit period; 303 (v) Caretaker of an ill or incapacitated person, 304 as verified by physician's certificate; 305 (vi) Age, if over sixty (60) or under eighteen 306 (18) years of age;

307 (vii) Receiving treatment for substance abuse, if 308 the person is in compliance with the substance abuse treatment 309 plan;

310 (viii) In a two-parent family, the caretaker of a 311 severely disabled child, as verified by a physician's certificate; 312 or

(ix) History of having been a victim of domestic 313 314 violence, which has been reported as required by state law and is 315 substantiated by police reports or court records, and being at 316 risk of further domestic violence, shall be exempt for a period as 317 deemed necessary by the department but not to exceed a total of 318 twelve (12) months, which need not be consecutive, in the sixty-month maximum benefit period. For the purposes of this 319 320 paragraph (ix), "domestic violence" means that an individual has 321 been subjected to: 322 Physical acts that resulted in, or 1. 323 threatened to result in, physical injury to the individual; 324 2. Sexual abuse; 325 Sexual activity involving a dependent 3.

326 child;

327 4. Being forced as the caretaker relative of
328 a dependent child to engage in nonconsensual sexual acts or
329 activities;
330 5. Threats of, or attempts at, physical or

331 sexual abuse;

332 6. Mental abuse; or
333 7. Neglect or deprivation of medical care.
334 (c) For all families, all adults who are not

335 specifically exempt shall be required to participate in work 336 activities for at least the minimum average number of hours per 337 week specified by federal law or regulation, not fewer than twenty 338 (20) hours per week (thirty-five (35) hours per week for 339 two-parent families) of which are attributable to the following 340 allowable work activities: 341 (i) Unsubsidized employment;

342 (ii) Subsidized private employment;

343 (iii) Subsidized public employment;

344 (iv) Work experience (including work associated 345 with the refurbishing of publicly assisted housing), if sufficient 346 private employment is not available;

347 (v) On-the-job training;

348 (vi) Job search and job readiness assistance 349 consistent with federal TANF regulations;

350 (vii) Community service programs;

351 (viii) Vocational educational training (not to 352 exceed twelve (12) months with respect to any individual);

353 (ix) The provision of child care services to an 354 individual who is participating in a community service program;

355 (x) Satisfactory attendance at high school or in a 356 course of study leading to a high school equivalency certificate, 357 for heads of household under age twenty (20) who have not 358 completed high school or received such certificate;

359 (xi) Education directly related to employment, for
360 heads of household under age twenty (20) who have not completed
361 high school or received such equivalency certificate.

362 The following are allowable work activities which may be

363 attributable to hours in excess of the minimum specified above:

364 (i) Job skills training directly related to 365 employment;

366 (ii) Education directly related to employment for 367 individuals who have not completed high school or received a high 368 school equivalency certificate;

(iii) Satisfactory attendance at high school or in a course of study leading to a high school equivalency, for individuals who have not completed high school or received such equivalency certificate;

373 (iv) Job search and job readiness assistance374 consistent with federal TANF regulations.

(d) If any adult or caretaker relative refuses to participate in allowable work activity as required under this subsection (6), the following full family TANF benefit penalty will apply, subject to due process to include notification, conciliation and a hearing if requested by the recipient:

(i) For the first violation, the department shall terminate the TANF assistance otherwise payable to the family for a two-month period or until the person has complied with the required work activity, whichever is longer;

(ii) For the second violation, the department shall terminate the TANF assistance otherwise payable to the family for a six-month period or until the person has complied with the required work activity, whichever is longer;

388 (iii) For the third violation, the department 389 shall terminate the TANF assistance otherwise payable to the 390 family for a twelve-month period or until the person has complied

391 with the required work activity, whichever is longer;

392 (iv) For the fourth violation, the person shall be393 permanently disqualified.

For a two-parent family, unless prohibited by state or 394 395 federal law, Medicaid assistance shall be terminated only for the 396 person whose failure to participate in allowable work activity caused the family's TANF assistance to be sanctioned under this 397 398 subsection (6) (d), unless an individual is pregnant, but shall 399 not be terminated for any other person in the family who is 400 meeting that person's applicable work requirement or who is not 401 required to work. Minor children shall continue to be eligible 402 for Medicaid benefits regardless of the disqualification of their 403 parent or caretaker relative for TANF assistance under this 404 subsection (6), unless prohibited by state or federal law.

(e) Any person enrolled in a two-year or four-year college program who meets the eligibility requirements to receive TANF benefits, and who is meeting the applicable work requirements and all other applicable requirements of the TANF program, shall continue to be eligible for TANF benefits while enrolled in the college program for as long as the person meets the requirements of the TANF program, unless prohibited by federal law.

(f) No adult in a work activity required under this subsection (6) shall be employed or assigned (i) when any other individual is on layoff from the same or any substantially equivalent job within six (6) months before the date of the TANF recipient's employment or assignment; or (ii) if the employer has terminated the employment of any regular employee or otherwise caused an involuntary reduction of its work force in order to fill

419 the vacancy so created with an adult receiving TANF assistance. 420 The Mississippi Employment Security Commission, established under 421 Section 71-5-101, shall appoint one or more impartial hearing 422 officers to hear and decide claims by employees of violations of 423 this paragraph (f). The hearing officer shall hear all the 424 evidence with respect to any claim made hereunder and such 425 additional evidence as he may require and shall make a 426 determination and the reason therefor. The claimant shall be 427 promptly notified of the decision of the hearing officer and the 428 reason therefor. Within ten (10) days after the decision of the 429 hearing officer has become final, any party aggrieved thereby may 430 secure judicial review thereof by commencing an action, in the 431 circuit court of the county in which the claimant resides, against the commission for the review of such decision, in which action 432 433 any other party to the proceeding before the hearing officer shall be made a defendant. Any such appeal shall be on the record which 434 435 shall be certified to the court by the commission in the manner 436 provided in Section 71-5-531, and the jurisdiction of the court 437 shall be confined to questions of law which shall render its 438 decision as provided in that section.

439 (7) The Department of Human Services may provide child care 440 for eligible participants who require such care so that they may 441 accept employment or remain employed. The department may also 442 provide child care for those participating in the TANF program 443 when it is determined that they are satisfactorily involved in 444 education, training or other allowable work activities. The 445 department may contract with Head Start agencies to provide child 446 care services to TANF recipients. The department may also arrange

447 for child care by use of contract or vouchers, provide vouchers in 448 advance to a caretaker relative, reimburse a child care provider, 449 or use any other arrangement deemed appropriate by the department, 450 and may establish different reimbursement rates for child care 451 services depending on the category of the facility or home. Any 452 center-based or group home child care facility under this 453 paragraph shall be licensed by the State Department of Health 454 pursuant to law. When child care is being provided in the child's 455 own home, in the home of a relative of the child, or in any other 456 unlicensed setting, the provision of such child care may be 457 monitored on a random basis by the Department of Human Services or 458 the State Department of Health. Transitional child care 459 assistance may be continued if it is necessary for parents to 460 maintain employment once support has ended, unless prohibited 461 under state or federal law. Transitional child care assistance may be provided for up to twenty-four (24) months after the last 462 463 month during which the family was eligible for TANF assistance, if 464 federal funds are available for such child care assistance.

465 (8) The Department of Human Services may provide 466 transportation or provide reasonable reimbursement for 467 transportation expenses that are necessary for individuals to be 468 able to participate in allowable work activity under the TANF 469 program.

(9) Medicaid assistance shall be provided to a family of TANF program participants for up to twenty-four (24) consecutive calendar months following the month in which the participating family would be ineligible for TANF benefits because of increased income, expiration of earned income disregards, or increased hours

475 of employment of the caretaker relative; however, Medicaid 476 assistance for more than twelve (12) months may be provided only 477 if a federal waiver is obtained to provide such assistance for 478 more than twelve (12) months and federal and state funds are 479 available to provide such assistance.

(10) The department shall require applicants for and recipients of public assistance from the department to sign a personal responsibility contract that will require the applicant or recipient to acknowledge his or her responsibilities to the state.

485 The department shall enter into an agreement with the (11)486 State Personnel Board and other state agencies that will allow 487 those TANF participants who qualify for vacant jobs within state 488 agencies to be placed in state jobs. State agencies participating 489 in the TANF work program shall receive any and all benefits received by employers in the private sector for hiring TANF 490 491 recipients. This subsection (11) shall be effective only if the 492 state obtains any necessary federal waiver or approval and if 493 federal funds are available therefor.

(12) No new TANF program requirement or restriction affecting a person's eligibility for TANF assistance, or allowable work activity, which is not mandated by federal law or regulation may be implemented by the Department of Human Services after the effective date of this act, unless such is specifically authorized by an amendment to this section by the Legislature.

500 (13) The Department of Human Services is hereby authorized 501 and directed to apply for necessary waivers under federal law to 502 implement a Child Development Trust Fund Pilot Program for

503 children in families receiving TANF assistance, using the

504 <u>following guidelines:</u>

505 (a) In families receiving TANF assistance, where child 506 abuse or neglect has been documented by a licensed social worker 507 or other personnel required to make reports of child abuse or 508 neglect by law, or where a family member has been convicted of a 509 felony as documented by a licensed social worker, the Department 510 of Human Services shall terminate the TANF assistance otherwise payable to the family and place the proceeds into a trust fund to 511 512 be expended by the department for the subsistence, housing, and 513 other benefit of the child or children in the family, as directed 514 by the department. 515 (b) For purposes of this Child Development Trust Fund 516 Pilot Program, in addition to any child abuse or neglect 517 determined by a youth court, child abuse or neglect shall include: (i) physical acts that resulted in, or threatened to result in, 518

519 physical injury to a dependent child; (ii) sexual activity

520 involving a dependent child; (iii) threats of, or attempts at,

521 physical or sexual abuse of a dependent child; (iv) mental abuse

522 of a dependent child; or (v) neglect or deprivation of medical

- 523 care for the dependent child.
- 524 (c) For purposes of this Child Development Trust Fund
- 525 <u>Pilot Program, a "felony" which disqualifies a family from</u>
- 526 receiving TANF assistance shall mean a felony conviction, guilty
- 527 plea or plea of nolo contendere to a felony of possession or sale
- 528 of drugs, murder, manslaughter, armed robbery, rape, sexual
- 529 battery, sex offense listed in Section 45-31-3(I), child abuse,
- 530 arson, grand larceny, burglary, gratification of lust or

531 aggravated assault which has not been reversed on appeal or for

- 532 which a pardon has not been granted.
- 533 (d) The department shall develop procedures for
- 534 applying for the Child Development Trust Fund Pilot Program by
- 535 <u>county human services departments, and shall establish guidelines</u>
- 536 for the expenditures of TANF funds for the benefit of children
- 537 participating in the program, and the department may contract with
- 538 private entities for providing services for children under the
- 539 <u>Child Development Trust Fund.</u>
- 540 SECTION 2 This act shall take effect and be in force from
- 541 and after July 1, 2000.