

By: Farris (By Request), Dawkins, King, Lee

To: Education;  
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2686

1 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO IMPLEMENT  
2 A PROGRAM TO MAKE AVAILABLE A FULL DAY VOLUNTARY PRE-KINDERGARTEN  
3 EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR FOUR-YEAR OLD CHILDREN IN THE STATE OF  
4 MISSISSIPPI WITH SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
5 EDUCATION, HEAD START OR OTHER CHILD DAYCARE PROGRAMS; TO  
6 ESTABLISH CERTAIN CRITERIA FOR THE PROGRAM; TO DIRECT THE STATE  
7 BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH AN APPLICATION PROCESS FOR  
8 PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM; TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
9 EDUCATION TO USE AVAILABLE FUNDING FOR GRANTS TO PARTICIPATING  
10 PROGRAMS; TO ESTABLISH A PRE-KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM FUND;  
11 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 act, the term "four-year  
16 old" means any child age 4 on or before September 1.

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

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

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

27 (3) The State Board of Education, in collaboration with the  
28 Department of Human Services, shall develop and implement a  
29 voluntary program to provide services for a full day  
30 pre-kindergarten program that addresses the cognitive, social and  
31 emotional needs of four-year old children, subject to the  
32 following conditions and provisions:

33 (a) The program shall be voluntary.

34 (b) The State Board of Education, the Department of  
35 Human Services, the State Board of Health, the Mississippi Head  
36 Start Association and the public and private daycare centers shall  
37 jointly develop criteria for (i) the enrollment of four-year old  
38 children who have predicted significant readiness deficiencies,

39 (ii) the qualifications of personnel employed to serve the said  
40 children, (iii) pupil/teacher ratio, (iv) health and safety  
41 standards, (v) hours of operation of such programs, and (vi)  
42 provide for the transportation of said children.

43 (c) The core curriculum of all such four-year old  
44 programs will meet or exceed the State Department of Education's  
45 Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum benchmarks. The curriculum shall  
46 encompass language development, mathematics language development:  
47 math concepts, social/emotional development and physical  
48 development (fine, gross, sensory motor development).

49 (d) To ensure coordination, the school district shall  
50 review available educational resources, programs and services in  
51 order to avoid duplication of public services.

52 (e) The State Board of Education shall determine a  
53 process for interested school districts to apply for grant funds  
54 in order to participate in such four-year old programs. Beginning  
55 in fiscal year 2001, the State Board of Education shall award  
56 grants for not less than one (1) program in each Mississippi  
57 congressional district and not more than twenty-five (25) programs  
58 in all, and in subsequent years may award additional program  
59 grants subject to the availability of funds specifically  
60 appropriated therefor by the Legislature. These programs shall be  
61 awarded to targeted school districts which are in need of an  
62 instructional program for four-year old children who have  
63 predicted significant readiness deficiencies. The State  
64 Department of Education will annually determine a cost-per-child  
65 rate which shall be used in funding a targeted program, and shall  
66 collaborate with the Department of Human Services in the  
67 determination of fair market rates for subsidized child care. The  
68 targeted districts will be responsible for blending services for  
69 children to avoid duplication in the areas of transportation,  
70 personnel, training of personnel, facilities and child nutrition.

71 (4) The Pre-Kindergarten Education Program Fund is  
72 established. Funds made available by the Legislature for the  
73 support and maintenance of full day pre-kindergarten education  
74 programs authorized under this act shall be deposited into the  
75 fund.

76 (5) The State Board of Education shall report to the  
77 Legislature on July 1, 2001, and annually thereafter, on the  
78 desirability of expanding and permanently establishing the  
79 program.

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