HOUSE BILL NO. 1493

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO
ESTABLISH A PROGRAM OF STUDENT ASSISTANCE AND PEER COUNSELING THAT
WILL BE USED IN ALL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE STATE AS AN
ALTERNATIVE TO THE DETENTION OR SUSPENSION OF STUDENTS; TO
PRESCRIBE THE MINIMUM COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED
PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. The State Department of Education shall establish
a program of student assistance and peer counseling that will be
used in all public high schools in the state as an alternative to
the detention or suspension of students. The department shall
determine and prescribe the components of the program, which will
include the following, at a minimum:

(a) The program will be conducted in a room at the
school that is a restricted environment. The principal of the
school is the only person who may admit students to the program,
and the principal also will determine how long a student will stay
in the program.

(b) Students in the program will receive assignments
from teachers, will be provided with one-on-one help with regular
schoolwork, and will receive a folder of learning activities to
help develop the skills necessary to cope with everyday behavior.

(c) Students will receive counseling from peer
counselors on a daily basis, in order to modify behavior and
develop the skills necessary to cope with everyday behavior. Peer
counselors also will tutor students with learning problems. Peer
counselors must be students who are juniors or seniors, make good
grades, work well with their peers, are not judgmental, have high
tolerance for people in trouble, are drug and alcohol free, and
set a positive example for living. Peer counselors will be
trained in listening skills, conflict resolution, and dealing with
current personal and family problems.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
and after July 1, 2001.