SENATE BILL NO. 2032

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-1-28, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CLARIFY THE DATES REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT THE ON-LINE ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER (EBT) SYSTEM FOR FOOD STAMPS AND TO REVISE THE CRITERIA FOR AN EBT SYSTEM PILOT PROJECT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 43-1-28, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

43-1-28. (1) The Department of Human Services shall develop an on-line electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system for the food stamp program in Mississippi as an alternative to issuing food stamp coupons. The EBT system developed by the department under this section shall (a) provide that food stamp benefits are stored in and issued from a central computer data base and are electronically accessed by households at the point of sale through the use of reusable magnetic-stripe plastic cards; and (b) meet all requirements and standards specified in 7 USCS Section 2016(i) and the rules and regulations issued under that provision for approval by the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

(2) The department shall develop and submit an application to the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture for approval of the EBT system. After the EBT system has been approved, the department shall implement and operate the system as a pilot project in a county selected by the department. After the pilot project has been evaluated and approved by the United States Department of Agriculture, and subject to the availability of

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funds specifically appropriated therefor, the system may be expanded statewide at a rate determined by the Executive Director of the Department of Human Services. The system shall be expanded and implemented statewide not later than October 1, 2002.

(3) The department shall seek to obtain the maximum amount of federal financial participation available to fund the cost of administering the EBT system.

(4) The Department of Human Services may develop an on-line electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program in Mississippi as an alternative to issuing cash or voucher payments. The EBT system developed by the department under this section shall (a) provide that TANF benefits are stored in and issued from a central computer data base and are electronically accessed; and (b) meet all requirements and standards specified in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-193), and the rules and regulations issued under that act. The department shall seek to obtain the maximum amount of federal financial participation available to fund the cost of administering the EBT system for TANF payments.

(5) In order to facilitate the acquisition and deployment of EBT products and services in Mississippi, the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (MDITS), at their discretion, may utilize EBT agreements from other states and/or multistate coalition agreements that allow other states to acquire EBT products and services. After going through the approved ITS bidding process and the state is unable to acquire an EBT contract, DHS and ITS may negotiate an EBT contract with any vendor who meets DHS and ITS, EBT requirements.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.