

By: Senator(s) Farris

To: Public Health and Welfare

SENATE BILL NO. 2301

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE THAT THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN  
2 SERVICES SHALL EXTEND ITS CONTRACT WITH MILLSAPS COLLEGE TO  
3 COLLECT DATA REGARDING TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES  
4 (TANF) RECIPIENTS IN CERTAIN COUNTIES, AND TO USE THE DATA FROM  
5 THOSE COUNTIES IN PREPARING ITS STUDY AND EVALUATION OF THE TANF  
6 WORK PROGRAM PURSUANT TO THE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND  
7 MILLSAPS COLLEGE; TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN  
8 SERVICES TO COLLECT CERTAIN DATA REGARDING THE PERSONAL  
9 RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK OPPORTUNITY RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996 AND  
10 TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) AND MAKE SUCH  
11 INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC; TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI  
12 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO COOPERATE IN ANY STUDY FUNDED BY A  
13 STATE, COUNTY OR MUNICIPAL BODY, AND CONDUCTED BY AN INDEPENDENT  
14 EXPERT THAT CONCERNS THE IMPACT UPON MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT ALIENS  
15 OF THE DENIAL OR TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE UNDER CERTAIN FEDERAL  
16 WELFARE PROGRAMS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

18 SECTION 1. (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services  
19 is hereby authorized to extend its contract with Millsaps College  
20 entered into in 1997 to study and evaluate the Temporary  
21 Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) work program as follows:

22 Millsaps College shall conduct a longitudinal study of the  
23 implementation of TANF and related welfare reforms. The research  
24 group shall consist of experienced researchers in welfare policy,  
25 social science and other relevant fields. The study shall include  
26 the following urban counties: DeSoto, Forrest, Harrison, Hinds,  
27 Jackson, Lauderdale, Lee and Washington, and shall include the  
28 following rural counties: Bolivar, Clay, Holmes, Jefferson,  
29 Jefferson Davis, Marshall, Noxubee, Perry, Quitman, Sharkey and  
30 Wilkinson. The study shall select subgroups representing  
31 important sectors of the assistance population, including type of  
32 area of residence (city, suburban, small town, rural, region),

33 level of education, literacy, work experience, number of adults in  
34 the home, number and age of children in the home, teen parentage,  
35 English proficiency, where relevant, and other such subgroups  
36 chosen by the institution. For each subgroup, the study shall  
37 assemble a statistically valid sample of TANF cases enrolled prior  
38 to October 1, 1997. The study shall continue until December 31,  
39 2004, and in the event this section is reenacted, the study shall  
40 continue until December 31, 2006. The Mississippi Department of  
41 Human Services and Millsaps College shall obtain permission to  
42 conduct the study from the subjects of the study and guarantee  
43 their privacy according to applicable privacy laws. To facilitate  
44 this permission, the study may be designed to refer to subjects by  
45 pseudonyms or codes and shall, in any event, guarantee anonymity  
46 to the subjects with limited access by outsiders to the data  
47 (other than identities) generated by the study. Millsaps College  
48 shall report the interim findings of the study with respect to  
49 each subgroup, to the Legislature by August 31 of each year,  
50 beginning August 31, 2002, and in the event this section is  
51 reenacted, shall report the final findings with respect to each  
52 subgroup by March 31, 2007. The reports shall be available to the  
53 public upon request.

54 (2) Millsaps College shall devise the study and identify the  
55 factors to be studied by not later than August 31, 2001. The  
56 study shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

57 (a) The study shall include demographic breakdowns  
58 including, but not limited to, race, gender, age and number of  
59 children in the household.

60 (b) The subjects of the study shall be followed after  
61 denial or termination of assistance, to the extent feasible. The  
62 evaluator shall attempt to maintain personal contact with the  
63 subjects of the study, and employ such methods as meetings,  
64 telephone contacts, written surveys and computer matches with  
65 other data bases to accomplish this purpose. The intent of this

66 feature of the study is to discover the paths people take after  
67 leaving welfare and the patterns of return to welfare, including  
68 the factors that may influence these paths and patterns.

69 (c) The study shall examine the influence of various  
70 employability, education and training programs upon employment,  
71 earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work  
72 (repeated application for welfare between periods of employment).

73 (d) The study shall examine the influence of various  
74 supportive services such as child care (including type and cost),  
75 transportation and payment of initial employment expenses upon  
76 employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and  
77 work.

78 (e) The study shall examine the influence of government  
79 benefits that are authorized by TANF to be received by subjects  
80 after they have been employed upon employment, earnings, job  
81 tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

82 (f) The study shall examine the frequency of unplanned  
83 occurrences in subjects' lives, such as illness or injury, family  
84 members' illness or injury, car breakdown, strikes, natural  
85 disasters, evictions, loss of other sources of income, domestic  
86 violence and crime, and their impact upon employment, earnings,  
87 job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

88 (g) The study shall examine the wages and other  
89 compensation, including health benefits and what they cost the  
90 employee, received by subjects who obtain employment, the type and  
91 characteristics of jobs, the hours and time of day of work, union  
92 status and the relationships of such factors to earnings, job  
93 tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

94 (h) The study shall examine the reasons for subjects'  
95 job loss, the availability of unemployment insurance, the reasons  
96 for a subject's return to welfare, programs or services utilized  
97 by subjects in the search for another job, the characteristics of  
98 the subjects' next job and the relationships of these factors to

99 re-employment, earnings, job tenure on the new job and cycling  
100 between welfare and work.

101 (i) The study shall examine the impact of mandatory  
102 work requirements, including the types of work activities to which  
103 the subjects were assigned, and the links between the requirements  
104 and the activities and sanctions, employment, earnings, job tenure  
105 and cycling between welfare and work.

106 (j) The study shall identify all sources and amounts of  
107 reported household nonwage income and examine the influence of the  
108 sources and amounts of nonwage, nonwelfare income on employment,  
109 earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

110 (k) The study shall examine sanctions, including child  
111 support enforcement and paternity establishment, the reasons  
112 sanctions are threatened, the number threatened, the number  
113 imposed and the reasons sanctions are not imposed or are ended,  
114 such as cooperation achieved or good cause established.

115 (l) The study shall track the subjects' usage of TANF  
116 benefits over the course of the lifetime sixty-month limit of TANF  
117 eligibility, including patterns of usage, relationships between  
118 consecutive usage of large numbers of months and other factors,  
119 status of all study subjects with respect to the time limit as of  
120 each report, characteristics of subjects exhausting the  
121 eligibility limit, types of exceptions granted to the sixty-month  
122 limit and numbers of cases within each type of exception.

123 (m) The study shall track subjects' participation in  
124 other public systems, including the public schools, the child  
125 welfare system, the criminal justice system, homeless and food  
126 services and others, and attempt to identify the positive or  
127 negative ripple effects in these systems of welfare policies,  
128 systems and procedures.

129 (n) The study shall examine the impact of the TANF  
130 program on the local economy and on other state agencies.

131 (3) The study authorized by this section shall only be  
132 funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services from the  
133 TANF program federal block grant not to exceed Three Hundred Fifty  
134 Thousand Dollars (\$350,000.00) annually.

135 (4) All data, statistics, computer software and reports made  
136 under this section shall be considered public records and the  
137 property of the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

138 SECTION 2. (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services  
139 shall collect and report upon all data in connection with  
140 federally funded or assisted welfare programs as federal law may  
141 require, including, but not limited to, Section 411 of the  
142 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of  
143 1996 and its implementing regulations and any amendments thereto  
144 as may from time to time be enacted. Such data shall be made  
145 available to the public within one (1) week after it has been sent  
146 to the United States Department of Health and Human Services at  
147 each regional office of the Mississippi Department of Human  
148 Services.

149 (2) On the same schedule as the data collection required by  
150 federal law and subsection (1) of this section, the Mississippi  
151 Department of Human Services shall collect and report additional  
152 information with respect to the Temporary Assistance for Needy  
153 Families (TANF) program, as follows:

154 (a) With respect to denials of applications for  
155 benefits, all of the information about the family as required  
156 under federal law, plus the specific reason or reasons for denial  
157 of the application.

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

161 (3) The Mississippi Department of Human Services shall  
162 collect all of the data as set forth in subsections (1) and (2) of  
163 this section on all cash assistance benefits provided to TANF

164 recipients that are not funded from the TANF program federal block  
165 grant or are not otherwise required to be included in the data  
166 collection and reporting provided for in subsections (1) and (2)  
167 of this section, and shall report such information on the same  
168 schedule as is required for the information collected in  
169 subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

170 (4) Reports made under this section shall be considered  
171 public records and shall promptly be made available to the public  
172 upon request at the end of each fiscal year at a reasonable cost  
173 directly related to the cost of copying and mailing the reports.  
174 The data underlying the reports shall be made available to  
175 academic institutions and public policy organizations involved in  
176 the study of welfare issues or programs after any reductions made  
177 to conform with applicable privacy laws. The data shall be  
178 provided by the Mississippi Department of Human Services at a  
179 reasonable cost directly related to the cost of copying and  
180 mailing the data.

181 (5) No later than July 1, 2001, the Mississippi Department  
182 of Human Services shall appoint seven (7) persons to an advisory  
183 panel. Four (4) panel members shall be experienced researchers in  
184 welfare policy, social science and other related fields from  
185 institutions of higher learning located in the Delta, northeast,  
186 southwest, southern or urban areas of Mississippi, one (1) member  
187 shall be a representative of the business community, one (1)  
188 member shall be a current or former welfare recipient, and one (1)  
189 member shall be a representative of a nonprofit human service  
190 organization. The role of the advisory panel is to ensure input  
191 from all sectors in the development of the research design and  
192 during the research process. Its role is advisory in nature and  
193 it is not empowered to direct the research effort or to specify  
194 results. The advisory panel shall have the following  
195 responsibilities:

196 (a) To advise researchers with regard to availability  
197 of data pertaining to elements to be studied according to  
198 legislation;

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

201 (c) To review interim and final reports of the research  
202 team; and

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

205 Analysis and interpretation of data gathered under the  
206 guidance of the research design and based upon the specifics  
207 delineated by the legislation shall be solely the responsibility  
208 of Millsaps College.

209 SECTION 3. The Mississippi Department of Human Services  
210 shall cooperate in any study funded by a federal, state, county or  
211 municipal body, and conducted by an independent expert, concerning  
212 the impact upon Mississippi residents of the denial or termination  
213 of assistance under the Food Stamps, TANF, Medicaid and Title XX  
214 social services programs pursuant to the changes enacted in the  
215 federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity  
216 Reconciliation Act of 1996. The purpose of such a study must be  
217 to examine the immediate and long-term effects on this population  
218 and on the state of the denial or termination of these forms of  
219 assistance, including the impact on the individuals, the alternate  
220 means they find to obtain support and care, and the impact on  
221 state and local spending and human services delivery systems.  
222 Such a study shall select a statistically valid sample of persons  
223 denied or terminated from each type of benefit and attempt to  
224 track them at least until July 31, 2002. Any reports from studies  
225 conducted with the cooperation of the Mississippi Department of  
226 Human Services shall be made available to the Legislature upon  
227 request, and a final report shall be submitted upon completion.  
228 These reports shall be available to the public upon request.

229           SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
230 and after July 1, 2001; and shall stand repealed from and after  
231 December 31, 2004.