

By: Senator(s) Smith

To: Public Health and Welfare; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2355

1 AN ACT TO CREATE A TASK FORCE ON ESTABLISHING A MISSISSIPPI
2 DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY PROGRAMS TO STUDY THE
3 IMPLEMENTATION OF A FREESTANDING AGENCY TO ADMINISTER CERTAIN
4 SPECIFIC CHILDREN SERVICE PROGRAMS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A
5 COORDINATED SERVICES FUNDING SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN IN
6 NEED OF SUCH SERVICES, AND TO STUDY OTHER CHILD SERVICE-RELATED
7 ISSUES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

9 SECTION 1. (1) There is hereby created a Task Force on
10 Establishing a Mississippi Department of Children and Family
11 Programs which shall study the implementation of a freestanding
12 agency of Mississippi government that would focus on and
13 administer the following programs relating to children: (a) the
14 functions of the Division of Youth Services of the Department of
15 Human Services; (b) the functions of the Child Support Unit of the
16 Department of Human Services; (c) the functions of all child
17 service programs presently administered by the Department of Human
18 Services, including the foster care or foster home placement
19 program, child adoption and child placement, and investigation of
20 child abuse and neglect; (d) the administration of the school
21 attendance officers enforcing the Mississippi Compulsory School
22 Attendance Law presently administered by the district attorney
23 offices; (e) the alternative school programs presently
24 administered by the various school districts; (f) the Center for
25 Prevention of School Violence program presently under the State
26 Department of Education; (g) the Support Our Students (SOS)
27 community-based program presently under the State Department of
28 Education and any other youth mentoring program operating under
29 public grant funds; (h) a Private Enterprise Mentorship Program



30 for children in the custody of the Department of Human Services;
31 (i) any program for children with severe emotional disturbances
32 which are not provided by the Mississippi Department of Mental
33 Health; (j) child care facility licensure programs presently
34 administered by the Mississippi Department of Health; and (k) a
35 Coordinated Services Plan for Children which uses a "deategorized
36 funding system" to budget and pay for all services required for an
37 individual child in need of the programs specified in (a) through
38 (i), creating a state and local Interagency Team to determine and
39 commit to an individual budget for each child, to ensure that the
40 funds for approved services follow the child. The task force may
41 study and make recommendations on any other program relating to
42 child welfare or children's services, including but not limited to
43 the youth court system in Mississippi, the child abuse and neglect
44 laws of Mississippi, and the impact of state and federal welfare
45 reform initiatives on child welfare services in Mississippi.

46 (2) The task force shall make a report of its findings and
47 recommendations to the Legislature, the Lieutenant Governor and
48 the Governor on October 1, 2001, for implementation in the 2002
49 Regular Session.

50 (3) The task force shall be composed of the following: (a)
51 the Executive Director of the Department of Human Services; (b)
52 the State Superintendent of Education; (c) the Executive Director
53 of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health; (d) the Executive
54 Director of the Division of Medicaid of the Office of the
55 Governor; (e) the executive director of one (1) regional mental
56 health/retardation center in the state to be designated by the
57 State Board of Mental Health; (f) the Attorney General; (g) the
58 Director of the Council of Youth Court Judges; (h) the Chairman of
59 the Senate Committee on Juvenile Justice; (i) the Chairman of the
60 House Committee on Juvenile Justice; (j) the Chairman of the
61 Senate Committee on Education; (k) the Chairman of the House
62 Committee on Education; (l) the Chairman of the Senate Committee



63 on Public Health and Welfare; and (m) the Chairman of the House
64 Committee on Public Health and Welfare. In the event any member
65 is unable to attend any meeting of the task force, such member
66 shall not be authorized to designate another person to attend or
67 vote at such meeting. Within fifteen (15) days after passage of
68 this section, on a day to be designated jointly by the Governor,
69 the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House of
70 Representatives, the task force shall meet and organize by
71 selecting from its membership a chairman and a vice chairman. The
72 vice chairman shall also serve as secretary and shall be
73 responsible for keeping all records of the task force. A majority
74 of the members of the task force shall constitute a quorum. All
75 members shall be notified in writing of all meetings, such notices
76 to be mailed at least five (5) days prior to the date on which a
77 meeting is to be held.

78 (4) Any member of the task force who is also a state
79 employee shall not be eligible to receive per diem compensation
80 for attending meetings of the task force, but may be reimbursed in
81 accordance with Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, for
82 mileage and actual expense incurred in the performance of their
83 duties, if authorized by vote, at a meeting of the task force,
84 which action shall be recorded in the official minutes of said
85 meeting. Legislative members of the task force shall be paid from
86 the contingent expense funds of their respective houses in the
87 same amounts as provided for committee meetings when the
88 Legislature is not in session.

89 (5) The task force is authorized to accept money from any
90 source, public or private, to be expended in implementing its
91 duties under this resolution.

92 (6) The State Fiscal Officer is hereby authorized and
93 directed to withhold any State General Funds allocated to any
94 state agency whose agency head is directed to attend meetings of
95 the Task Force on Creating a Department of Children and Family



96 Programs for any month in which such agency head fails to attend a
97 regularly called meeting of the task force, without good cause.

98 (7) The task force is empowered to hire staff as well as to
99 utilize staff already employed by the agencies affected by this
100 section and any other assistance made available to it.

101 (8) Funding for the task force may be provided from any
102 funds that may be appropriated by the Legislature for that
103 purpose.

104 (9) Upon presentation of its report, the task force shall be
105 dissolved.

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

