SENATE BILL NO. 2578
(As Sent to Governor)

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-16-11, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO DEVELOP AND ISSUE CRITERIA FOR AN OCCUPATIONAL DIPLOMA FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 37-16-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-16-11. (1) A student who has been properly classified, in accordance with rules established by the state board as "educable mentally retarded," "trainable mentally retarded," "deaf," "specific learning disabled," "physically handicapped whose ability to communicate orally or in writing is seriously impaired" or "emotionally handicapped" shall not be required to meet all requirements of Section 37-16-7, and shall, upon meeting all applicable requirements prescribed by the district school board, be awarded a special diploma in a form prescribed by the state board; provided, however, that such special graduation requirements prescribed by the district school board shall include minimum graduation requirements as prescribed by the state board. Any such student who meets all special requirements of the district school board for his exceptionality, but is unable to meet the appropriate special state minimum requirements, shall be awarded a special certificate of completion in a form prescribed by the state board. Nothing provided in this section, however, shall be construed to limit or restrict the right of an exceptional student solely to a special diploma. Any such student shall, upon proper request, be afforded the opportunity to fully
meet all requirements of Section 37-16-7 through the standard procedures established therein and thereby qualify for a standard diploma upon graduation.

(2) The State Board of Education shall develop and issue criteria for a Mississippi Occupational Diploma for students having a disability as defined by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, any such student, upon proper request, shall be afforded the opportunity to fully meet such requirements and qualify for an occupational diploma upon graduation.

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