To: Education; Appropriations

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE                        REGULAR SESSION 2001
By: Senator(s) Johnson (38th)

SENATE BILL NO. 2641

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-3-81 AND 37-3-83, MISSISSIPPI
CODE OF 1972, TO DIRECT THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO
ESTABLISH A SCHOOL SAFETY CENTER TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL AND CRISIS
ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS, AND TO AUTHORIZE SCHOOL SAFETY
GRANTS TO LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO FINANCE CERTAIN PROGRAMS TO
PROVIDE SCHOOL SAFETY; TO ESTABLISH A SCHOOL CRISIS MANAGEMENT
PROGRAM WITHIN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TO PROVIDE FOR A
TEAM OF PROFESSIONAL INDIVIDUALS TO RESPOND TO TRAUMATIC OR
VIOLENT SITUATIONS THAT IMPACT STUDENTS AND FACULTY IN THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS; TO PROVIDE PROCEDURES FOR THE OPERATION OF THE PROGRAM
AND TO AUTHORIZE FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED
PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 37-3-81, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
amended as follows:

37-3-81. The Department of Education shall establish and
maintain a School Safety Center, which shall operate a statewide
information clearinghouse that (a) provides assistance to school
districts and communities during school crisis; and (b) provides
technical assistance to public school officials and parents who
need assistance in developing school safety plans and in
maintaining a safe school environment.

SECTION 2. Section 37-3-83, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
amended as follows:

37-3-83. (1) There is established within the State
Department of Education a School Safety Grant Program, available
to all eligible public school districts, to assist in financing
programs to provide school safety.

(2) Subject to the extent of appropriations available, the
School Safety Grant Program shall offer any of the following
specific preventive services, and other additional services
appropriate to school safety, to be provided through the School Safety Center:

(a) Metal detectors;

(b) Video surveillance cameras, communication equipment and monitoring equipment for classrooms, school buildings and school buses;

(c) Crisis management/action teams responding to school violence; and

(d) Violence prevention training, conflict resolution training, and other appropriate training designated by the State Department of Education for faculty and staff.

(3) Each local school district of this state may annually apply for school safety grant funds subject to appropriations by the Legislature. In order to be eligible for such program, each local school board desiring to participate shall apply to the State Department of Education by May 31 before the beginning of the applicable fiscal year on forms provided by the department, and shall be required to establish a local School Safety Task Force to involve members of the community in the school safety effort. The State Department of Education shall determine by July 1 of each succeeding year which local school districts have submitted approved applications for school safety grants.

(4) As part of the School Safety Grant Program, the State Department of Education may conduct a pilot program to research the feasibility of using video camera equipment in the classroom to address the following:

(a) Determine if video cameras in the classroom reduce student disciplinary problems;

(b) Enable teachers to present clear and convincing evidence of a student's disruptive behavior to the student, the principal, the superintendent and the student's parents; and
(c) Enable teachers to review teaching performance and receive diagnostic feedback for developmental purposes.

The results of any such pilot program shall be reported to the Chairmen of the Education Committees in the House of Representatives and Senate by December 15 of the year following implementation of the pilot program. Any funds appropriated by the Legislature for the support of the pilot program shall be used only for the purchase of equipment and supplies necessary for implementation of the pilot program.

(5) Any local school district may use video camera equipment in classrooms for the purpose of monitoring school disciplinary problems.

SECTION 3. (1) There is established a School Crisis Management Program which shall be attached to the State Department of Education. Under this program, the State Department of Education shall create an office to provide a quick response team of mental health professionals, law enforcement officers experienced in school crisis situations, attorneys and other individuals with appropriate training, to respond to traumatic or violent situations that impact students and faculty in the public schools in Mississippi. The State Department of Education may enter into a contractual agreement with the Mississippi Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers for the administration of the program. The School Crisis Management Program shall meet the following conditions:

(a) The basic response team shall consist of at least three (3) individuals, and may consist of a larger number depending on the size of the school and the nature of the event. Each team shall include a licensed counselor or licensed psychologist, a licensed social worker, a law enforcement officer experienced in school crisis situations, and may include an attorney and other individuals with appropriate training. The State Department of Education shall contract with the following
associations in order to train and commit individuals on a team: The Mississippi Counseling Association, the Mississippi Psychological Association, the Mississippi Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the Mississippi Sheriffs Association, The Mississippi Bar and other appropriate associations associated with individuals trained in school crisis management.

(b) In order to access the services of a response team, the request shall be made by the local school principal or the superintendent of schools who shall make the request to the State Department of Education, or its contact designee.

(c) The requesting school or school district shall commit student time to the response team during the school day either individually or in groups.

(d) A response team shall enter a school to work with students and faculty for no more than a three-day period.

(e) Response teams shall be organized on a regional basis in order to provide immediate access to these services.

(f) The State Department of Education, or its contact designee, shall operate a toll-free incoming wide area telephone service for the purpose of reporting suspected cases of school violence, and other traumatic situations impacting on students and faculty in the public schools.

(g) Subject to the availability of funds specifically appropriated therefor by the Legislature, the expenses of the quick response teams and their administrative support shall be provided from state funds, and the State Department of Education may apply for and expend funds for the support and maintenance of this program from private and other funding sources.

(2) Local school districts, school superintendents and principals shall be fully authorized to request and utilize the services of quick response teams provided for under this section. This section shall not be construed to require school officials to
request the services of quick response teams provided for under this section.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.