AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 69-15-11, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO TRANSFER SUPERVISION, MANAGEMENT, AND CONTROL OF THE VETERINARY DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY TO THE COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE AT MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 69-15-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

69-15-11. (a) There is created the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board which shall, in conjunction with the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University, maintain a complete and adequate veterinary diagnostic laboratory at Jackson capable of rendering quick and accurate diagnoses of disease conditions of animals and livestock and aquaculture, including but not limited to cattle, horses, sheep, swine, poultry and pets. The laboratory shall not conduct any regulatory testing for food purposes.

(b) The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board is to be composed of the Chairman of the Board of Animal Health; the Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce; the Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University of Agriculture and Applied Science; a person appointed by the President of Alcorn State University from its land grant staff who is not a member of the Board of Animal Health; a licensed and practicing veterinarian appointed by the President of the Mississippi State Veterinary Medical Association who is not a member of the Board of Animal Health; the State Veterinarian and the State Chemist. The Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine
shall serve as chairman of the board.

(c) The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board shall meet every other month, and the chairman may call special meetings of the board as he deems necessary. The members of the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board who are not full-time public officers or public employees shall be entitled to a per diem as provided in Section 25-3-69. All members of the board are entitled to mileage and actual and necessary expenses in attending such regular or special meetings of the board as provided in Section 25-3-41.

(d) There is created an advisory council to advise the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board on matters concerning the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. The council shall be composed of the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, and one (1) appointee of the Lieutenant Governor and one (1) appointee of the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The members of the advisory council shall serve in an advisory capacity only. For attending meetings of the council, such legislators shall receive per diem and expenses which shall be paid from the contingent expense funds of their respective houses in the same amounts provided for committee meetings when the Legislature is not in session; however, no per diem or expenses for attending meetings of the council shall be paid while the Legislature is in session. No per diem and expenses shall be paid except for attending meetings of the council without prior approval of the proper committee in their respective houses.

(e) The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board shall select from a written list of three (3) recommendations submitted by the Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University of Agriculture and Applied Science, an executive director of the laboratory, who holds a degree of veterinary medicine from a recognized college or university; is board
certified in one (1) of the following basic diagnostic disciplines: toxicology, pathology, microbiology, virology or clinical pathology; and has engaged in the practice of veterinary clinical diagnosis for at least ten (10) years, five (5) years of which were in a supervisory capacity. The executive director shall select and employ such veterinarians, bacteriologists, pathologists, technicians, clerical assistants, and other personnel necessary to carry out the objective of this section. The salaries, compensation and expenses of such employees shall be sufficient to insure the employment of competent persons and shall be paid from funds at the disposal of the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. The executive director shall be responsible for the daily operations of the laboratory. The College of Veterinary Medicine shall provide such office and technical equipment, and other items of personal property necessary and proper to effect the full meaning of this section.

(f) All funds, property and other assets of the Board of Animal Health's diagnostic laboratory shall be transferred to the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board on July 1, 1998. All current positions of the Board of Animal Health's diagnostic laboratory shall be transferred to the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board on July 1, 1998. Such transfer shall be based on consultation with the Legislative Budget Office staff and on estimated fiscal year 1998 budget expenditures as contained in the fiscal year 1999 budget request of the Board of Animal Health. Before establishment and allotment of such resources for fiscal year 1999, copies of the proposed division of resources shall be provided for review to the advisory council for the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board, the Legislative Budget Office and the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance, Evaluation and Expenditure Review. It is the intent of the Legislature that funds shall be transferred to the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
Board that are sufficient to carry out the purposes of House Bill No. 1584, 1998 Regular Session [Laws, 1998, Chapter 570].

(g) The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board may promulgate rules and regulations to implement the provisions of House Bill No. 1584, 1998 Regular Session [Laws, 1998, Chapter 570].

(h) All funds, property and other assets and all current positions of the diagnostic laboratory shall be transferred to the College of Veterinary Medicine on July 1, 2001. The budget of the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory shall be funded as a separate line item within the general appropriation bill for the College of Veterinary Medicine.

(2) The College of Veterinary Medicine shall maintain a complete and adequate veterinary diagnostic laboratory at Jackson and any person licensed to practice veterinary medicine, veterinary surgery, veterinary dentistry, or any vocational-agriculture teacher, bona fide farmer or county agent in the State of Mississippi or agent of the State Veterinarian shall have made available to him services of the laboratory. The laboratory shall examine blood and urinal specimens, and shall conduct blood tests and bacterial tests, and make reports thereon, of all specimens, submitted by any licensed veterinarian, or vocational-agriculture teacher, bona fide farmer, or county agent of this state or agent of the State Veterinarian. The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Board shall be required to set reasonable fees for such examinations, tests, reports or other diagnostic services in such amounts as will pay for the expenses of providing same. The executive director may contract and enter into agreements for services with the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University as necessary to carry out the duties of the laboratory.

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