HOUSE BILL NO. 1344

AN ACT TO CREATE THE PREK-20 EDUCATION COORDINATING ENTITY; TO CHARGE THE ENTITY WITH THE DUTY TO MAKE A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF METHODS TO BETTER ALIGN POLICIES AND PRACTICES ACROSS EDUCATIONAL SECTORS AND TO SUBMIT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION BY THE LEGISLATURE AND THE AGENCIES, DEPARTMENTS, OFFICES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE STATE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE ENTITY; TO PROVIDE THAT THE ENTITY SHALL MAKE A REPORT OF ITS WORK TO THE LEGISLATURE AND THE GOVERNOR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2002; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds that because the quality of education has a profound impact upon the social, cultural and economic enhancement of the people of Mississippi, the following are some of the educational goals of the state:

(a) That the students, parents, general citizenry, local school teachers and administrators, local governments, local school boards, colleges, universities and state government shall share the responsibility for the quality of education delivered through the educational systems in the State of Mississippi:

(i) To produce a functionally literate school population;

(ii) To ensure that all students master the most essential parts of a basic education;

(iii) To encourage the common efforts of students, parents, teachers, administrators and business and professional leaders for the establishment of specific goals for performance;

(iv) To improve instructional and administrative quality, to relate the education community to other policymakers and to achieve increased competency among students, teachers and administrators;
(b) That emphasis shall be placed upon early mastery of the skills necessary to success in school and that quality, performance-based early childhood education programs shall be considered an essential element of a comprehensive education system;

(c) That the children of this state shall receive a period of instruction sufficient to train each in the basic educational skills adequate for the student to take his or her place in society and make a contribution as a citizen of this state, and that all children shall be encouraged to continue their education until they have completed high school;

(d) That the high school students of this state shall receive the opportunity and encouragement to complete a college preparation curriculum; and

(e) That the citizenry of this state shall have access to programs in adult lifelong learning, worker training and professional development activities.

SECTION 2. (1) There is created the PreK-20 Education Coordinating Entity, the duties of which shall be to study the methods to better align policies and practices across educational sectors and specifically to:

(a) Determine methods by which Mississippi could launch a broad public campaign directed to all segments of the population underscoring the importance of high school completion, advanced education and adult lifelong learning;

(b) Develop ways to expand and improve prekindergarten programs for children in all areas of the state by establishing pilot projects in selected school districts, using college-student volunteers and creating partnerships among the state's schools, colleges, universities, social service agencies and providers;

(c) Make a comprehensive study of those school districts ranking lowest on the state's accreditation measures and create guidelines for enhancing partnerships between those school districts.
districts and the teaching programs in the colleges and universities;

(d) Develop a business plan to strengthen teacher supply and quality in all academic areas;

(e) Research ways to obtain federal funds to help increase advanced placement course offerings throughout the state;

(f) Design methods to develop better pre-service and in-service training for school principals through a coordinated approach among the institutions of higher learning, the community colleges and the State Department of Education;

(g) Facilitate partnerships among college and university faculty and school administrators and teachers to develop a school-based strategic research plan to address real needs in the classroom;

(h) Develop a plan to promote the college prep curriculum and to encourage all high school students to complete it;

(i) Conduct a study of the state's human resource needs and reshape educational offerings in adult lifelong learning, worker training and professional development; and

(j) Review possibilities of creating proactive partnerships with business and industry that will enable the state's colleges and universities to become full partners in economic development.

(2) The PreK-20 Education Coordinating Entity shall be composed of seventeen (17) members as follows:

(a) The Executive Director of Public Education Forum;

(b) The Chairman of the State Board of Education;

(c) The Chairman of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges;

(d) The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning;
(e) The Director of Mississippi Private School Association;

(f) Twelve (12) other persons appointed by the Governor. In making appointments to the entity, the Governor shall:

(i) Endeavor to achieve a diverse representation of the citizens of our state, with all socioeconomic and cultural populations and geographical areas of the state being represented;

(ii) Appoint representatives of the following professions, distinct communities or special interest groups: public and private school teachers, public and private school principals, business leaders, college and university faculty members and parents of school-age children;

(iii) Endeavor to ensure that at least one-third (1/3) of his appointments consist of individuals who work directly with the school students in some capacity;

(3) At its first meeting, the entity shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from its membership and shall adopt rules for transacting its business and keeping records. Members of the entity shall receive a per diem in the amount provided in Section 25-3-69 for each day engaged in the business of the entity. Members of the entity shall receive reimbursement for travel expenses incurred while engaged in official business of the entity in accordance with Section 25-3-41.

(4) Before December 1, 2002, the entity shall make a report of its work and recommendations for action, and it shall submit a copy of the report to the Legislature and the Governor.

(5) The entity shall be assigned to the Governor's Office for administrative purposes only, and the Governor's Office shall designate staff to assist the entity. The entity may solicit grants, donations and other funds and may accept and expend any funds that are made available to the entity to carry out its purpose.

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(6) All agencies, departments, offices and institutions of the state, including the state universities and the community and junior colleges, shall cooperate with the entity with such assistance as requested by the entity.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2002.