SENATE BILL NO. 2498

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-151-77, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REDUCE THE REQUIRED PUPIL-TEACHER RATIO FOR CLASSES FUNDED UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI ADEQUATE EDUCATION PROGRAM ON A PHASED-IN BASIS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 37-151-77, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-151-77. To qualify for funds provided in this chapter, each school district shall not exceed a pupil-teacher ratio based on enrollment in Kindergarten and Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 as follows:

School Year 2002-2003: 22/1
School Year 2003-2004: 21/1
School Year 2004-2005: 20/1
School Year 2005-2006: 19/1
School Year 2006-2007: 18/1

For Grades 5 through 12, pupil-teacher ratio shall be determined based on appropriate accreditation standards developed by the Mississippi Commission on School Accreditation.

Any local district may apply to the State Board of Education for approval of a waiver to this section by submitting and justifying an alternative educational program to serve the needs of enrollment in Grades Kindergarten and 1 through 4. The State Board of Education shall approve or disapprove of such waiver forty-five (45) days after receipt of such application. If a school district violates the provisions of this section, the state aid for the ensuing fiscal year to such school district shall be reduced by the percentage variance that the actual pupil-teacher ratios in such school district have to the required pupil-teacher ratios.
ratios mandated in this section. Provided, that notwithstanding
the provisions of this section, the State Board of Education is
authorized to waive the pupil-teacher requirements specified
herein upon a finding that a good faith effort is being made by
the school district concerned to comply with the ratio provisions
but that for lack of classroom space which was beyond its control
it is physically impossible for the district to comply, and the
cost of temporary classroom space cannot be justified. In the
event any school district meets Level 4 or 5 accreditation
standards, the State Board of Education may, in its discretion,
exempt such school district from the maximum pupil-teacher ratio
in Kindergarten and Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 prescribed herein.

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