

By: Representative Clark

To: Education;  
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 731

1 AN ACT TO BE KNOWN AS THE "FAMILY LITERACY FOR FAMILY  
 2 INDEPENDENCE ACT"; TO DEFINE CERTAIN TERMS USED IN THE ACT; TO  
 3 ESTABLISH A FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM UNDER THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
 4 EDUCATION, ACTING JOINTLY WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES,  
 5 FOR THE PURPOSE OF CREATING FAMILY LITERACY PROJECTS IN  
 6 ECONOMICALLY AND EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED AREAS OF THE STATE;  
 7 TO REQUIRE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROGRAM TO PERFORM COMMUNITY  
 8 SERVICE ACTIVITIES IN EXCHANGE FOR BENEFITS RECEIVED FROM THE  
 9 PROGRAM; TO AUTHORIZE CERTAIN EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES THAT RECEIVE  
 10 STATE FUNDING TO APPLY FOR GRANTS TO SUPPORT FAMILY LITERACY  
 11 PROJECTS; TO REQUIRE FAMILY LITERACY PROJECTS TO BE COLLABORATIVE  
 12 UNDERTAKINGS IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES; TO PRESCRIBE REQUIREMENTS  
 13 FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS AND FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN AWARDING  
 14 GRANTS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

16 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the  
 17 "Family Literacy for Family Independence Act."

18 **SECTION 2.** The Legislature finds and declares that numerous  
 19 studies have shown the inextricable link between chronic welfare  
 20 dependency and intergenerational undereducation and that many  
 21 welfare recipients need to improve their literacy skills in order  
 22 to succeed in the workplace. The Legislature further finds that  
 23 strong, long-term evidence demonstrates that family literacy not  
 24 only helps families with educational obstacles, but also moves  
 25 them from welfare dependence to self-sufficiency while, at the  
 26 same time, strengthening the family unit. The purpose of this act  
 27 is to establish a mechanism to teach basic skills to such families  
 28 through the context of family and work while providing  
 29 opportunities for adults to gain work experience.

30 **SECTION 3.** As used in this act, the following words and  
 31 phrases have the meanings ascribed in this section unless the  
 32 context clearly indicates otherwise:



33           (a) "Eligible parent" means a parent, guardian or  
34 custodian who meets the following requirements:

35                 (i) Has at least one (1) child who is under the  
36 age of seventeen (17) years;

37                 (ii) Lacks sufficient mastery of basic educational  
38 or basic English language skills needed to function effectively in  
39 society or lacks a high school diploma or its equivalent; and

40                 (iii) Is a citizen or legal resident of the United  
41 States or is present lawfully in the United States.

42           (b) "Family literacy program" means a program of  
43 services that are of sufficient intensity, in terms of hours, and  
44 of sufficient duration to make sustainable changes in a family,  
45 which services integrate all of the following activities:

46                 (i) Interactive literacy activities between  
47 parents and their children;

48                 (ii) Training for parents regarding how to be the  
49 primary teacher for their children and full partners in the  
50 education of their children;

51                 (iii) Parent literacy training that leads to  
52 economic self-sufficiency; and

53                 (iv) An age-appropriate educational program  
54 designed to prepare children for success in school and life  
55 experiences.

56           (c) "Literacy" means, when used with respect to an  
57 individual, the ability of the individual to speak, read and write  
58 English and to compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency  
59 necessary to:

60                 (i) Function on the job, in the family of the  
61 individual and in society;

62                 (ii) Achieve the goals of the individual; and

63                 (iii) Develop the knowledge potential of the  
64 individual.



65 (d) "Eligible grantees" includes Headstart and other  
66 early childhood programs, adult education providers, public school  
67 districts and other local education agencies, family resource  
68 centers, postsecondary educational institutions, public or private  
69 nonprofit agencies, technical schools, and other institutions that  
70 have the ability to provide model family literacy services to  
71 adults and families.

72 **SECTION 4.** (1) The family literacy program is established  
73 jointly under the State Department of Education and the Department  
74 of Human Services to increase the basic academic and literacy  
75 skills of eligible parents and their children. The State  
76 Department of Education, in conjunction with the Department of  
77 Human Services, shall establish family literacy projects as part  
78 of the overall program at locations in the state where there is a  
79 high incidence of economic and educational disadvantage.

80 (2) The State Board of Education shall adopt procedures  
81 necessary to implement the family literacy program.

82 (3) The Department of Human Services shall establish  
83 guidelines for requiring program participants to engage in  
84 community service activities in exchange for benefits received  
85 from the program. Participants must be allowed to choose from a  
86 variety of community and faith-based service providers that have  
87 arranged with the department to provide community service  
88 opportunities or program services. The department shall encourage  
89 participants to engage in community services within their own  
90 communities. Participants also must be allowed to fulfill the  
91 requirements of this subsection by providing community services to  
92 the program from which they received family literacy program  
93 services.

94 (4) Beginning in 2004, before December 31, the State  
95 Department of Education and Department of Human Services shall  
96 submit jointly an annual report to the Governor, Lieutenant  
97 Governor and Speaker of the House of Representatives regarding the



98 community service activities of family literacy program  
99 participants. The report must include data on the number of  
100 participants, the types of community service performed and the  
101 number of hours spent in community service activities.

102 **SECTION 5.** (1) A local school district, education agency or  
103 adult education program that receives funding from the state may  
104 apply for a Family Literacy for Family Independence Grant, in an  
105 amount not to exceed Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00), to  
106 support a family literacy project if the State Board of Education  
107 and Department of Human Services determine that a high percentage  
108 of adults in the relevant geographical area have not graduated  
109 from high school.

110 (2) A family literacy project must be a collaborative  
111 undertaking of a project team that consists of representatives of  
112 each of the following:

113 (a) One or more local school districts;

114 (b) An adult education provider that receives state  
115 funding;

116 (c) A private or public early childhood education  
117 provider; and

118 (d) A representative of the Department of Human  
119 Services and any other social service, governmental or private  
120 agency that may provide assistance for the planning and operation  
121 of the project.

122 (3) Family literacy projects selected for grants must use  
123 either a nationally recognized family literacy model, such as  
124 models developed by the National Center for Family Literacy, or a  
125 model that, in the determination of the project team, State  
126 Department of Education and Department of Human Services, is  
127 superior to a nationally recognized family literacy model.

128 (4) Through a family literacy project, eligible parents must  
129 be instructed in basic education and general educational  
130 development. Preschool and school-age children must receive



131 instruction in developmentally age-appropriate educational  
132 programs. Other planned, structured activities involving parents  
133 and children in learning activities may be established as part of  
134 the project curriculum.

135 (5) A Family Literacy for Family Independence Grant  
136 application must include a plan addressing, at a minimum, the  
137 following:

138 (a) Identification and recruitment of eligible parents  
139 and children;

140 (b) Screening and preparation of parents and children  
141 for participation in the program;

142 (c) Food services for program participants;

143 (d) Instructional programs that promote academic and  
144 literacy skills and which equip parents to provide needed support  
145 for the educational growth and success of their children;

146 (e) A determination that at least ten (10) parents with  
147 children will enroll in and be eligible for the program;

148 (f) The provision of child care through either private  
149 or public providers;

150 (g) A transportation plan for participants;

151 (h) The membership of the project team required under  
152 subsection (2) of this section; and

153 (i) A plan for the assessment of parents, children and  
154 the overall family literacy program.

155 (6) In selecting grant recipients, the State Board of  
156 Education and Department of Human Services shall consider, at a  
157 minimum, the following:

158 (a) The educational needs of the local adult  
159 population;

160 (b) The incidence of unemployment in the area;

161 (c) The degree to which community collaboration and  
162 partnership demonstrate the ability to bring additional resources  
163 to the program;



164 (d) The readiness and likelihood of the applying  
165 organization to establish a successful family literacy project;

166 (e) The extent to which the family literacy services  
167 for parents place equal emphasis on teaching both parents and  
168 children;

169 (f) The extent the project works with heads of families  
170 who are economically disadvantaged, eligible for welfare or who  
171 are unemployed;

172 (g) The project's requirement that established goals  
173 and objectives be achieved, which goals and objectives must  
174 include increased parent skills, increased child development,  
175 increased parent-child interaction, employment and reduced  
176 dependence on public assistance;

177 (h) The project's plan to evaluate the overall  
178 effectiveness of the program based on performance-based outcome  
179 measurements such as: improved educational levels; improved  
180 parenting and life skills; reduced dependency on welfare;  
181 increased employment; increased self-sufficiency of adults;  
182 improved developmental skills and independent learning of the  
183 children; increased parental participation in their children's  
184 education; and home environments that are supportive of  
185 educational endeavors; and

186 (i) A project's commitment to allocate at least five  
187 percent (5%) of funds and to develop a plan for professional  
188 development and training for family literacy program staff and  
189 administrators to ensure the proper integration of adult education  
190 and children's educational programs and the blending of human and  
191 financial resources.

192 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
193 and after July 1, 2003.

