To: Education; Appropriations

MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE
By: Representatives Hines, Bailey, Broomfield, Dickson

HOUSE BILL NO. 811

AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI YOUTHBUILD ACT TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE OFFICE OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES; TO PROVIDE THAT CERTAIN DISADVANTAGED YOUTH WILL BE PROVIDED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, AND TRAINING IN THE CONSTRUCTION OR REHABILITATION OF HOUSING FOR SPECIAL NEED POPULATIONS, VERY LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS, OR LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS; TO ESTABLISH REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUTHBUILD PROGRAMS, ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES, ENTITIES ELIGIBLE TO ADMINISTER A YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM, AND GRANT APPLICATIONS TO ADMINISTER A YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. This act may be cited as the "Mississippi Youthbuild Act."

SECTION 2. The purpose of this act is:

(a) To enable economically disadvantaged youth, especially youth who have not finished high school, to obtain the education, job skills training, personal counseling, leadership development skills training, job placement assistance, and long-term follow-up services necessary for them to achieve permanent economic self-sufficiency, while at the same time providing valuable community service that addresses urgent community needs including the demand for affordable housing and the need for young role models and mentors for younger teenagers and children;

(b) To provide communities the opportunity to establish or rebuild neighborhood stability in economically depressed and low-income areas, as well as historic areas requiring restoration or preservation, while providing economically disadvantaged youth and youth who have not finished high school an opportunity for meaningful participation in society;
(c) To allow communities to expand the supply of affordable housing for homeless and other low-income individuals by utilizing the energies and talents of economically disadvantaged youth and young people who have not graduated from high school; and

(d) To foster the development of leadership skills and a commitment to community development among youth.

SECTION 3. As used in this act:

(a) "Applicant" means a public or private not-for-profit agency eligible to provide education and employment training under federal or state employment training programs.

(b) "Director" means the Director of the Office of Family and Children's Services of the Department of Human Services.

(c) "Very low-income" means a person or household whose income is at or below fifty percent (50%) of the median family income, adjusted for household size, for the county where the household is located.

(d) "Youthbuild" means any program that provides disadvantaged youth with opportunities for employment, education, leadership development, entrepreneurial skills development, and training in the construction or rehabilitation of housing for special need populations, very low-income households or low-income households.

SECTION 4. The director is authorized to make grants to applicants for the purpose of carrying out Youthbuild programs as approved under this section. All programs funded under the provisions of this section shall reflect strong youth and community involvement. In addition, funding provided under this section shall be used by each Youthbuild program to provide, at a minimum, the following services:

(a) Acquisition, rehabilitation, acquisition and rehabilitation, or construction of housing and related facilities
to be used for the purpose of providing home ownership for
disadvantaged persons, residential housing for homeless
individuals, and low-income and very low-income families, or
transitional housing for persons who are homeless, have
disabilities, are ill, are deinstitutionalized, or have special
needs, and rehabilitation or construction of community facilities
by not-for-profit or public agencies.

(b) Integrated education and job skills training
services and activities, which are evenly divided within the
program, with fifty percent (50%) of students' time spent in
classroom-based instruction, counseling, and leadership
development instruction and fifty percent (50%) of their time
spent in experimental training on the construction site. The
programs shall include, at a minimum, the following elements:

(i) An education component that includes basic
skills instruction, secondary education services, and other
activities designed to lead to the attainment of a high school
diploma or its equivalent. The curriculum for this component
shall include math, language arts, vocational educational, life
skills training, social studies related to the cultural and
community history of the students, leadership skills, and other
topics at the discretion of the programs. Bilingual services
shall be available for individuals with limited English
proficiency. The desired minimum teacher to student ratio shall
be one (1) teacher for every eighteen (18) students.

(ii) A work experience and skills training
component apprenticeship program that includes the construction
and rehabilitation activities described in paragraph (a) of this
section. The process of construction must be coupled with skills
training and with close on-site supervision by experienced
trainers. The curriculum for this component shall contain a set
of locally agreed upon skills and competencies that are
systematically taught, with a student's mastery assessed
individually on a regular, ongoing basis. Safety skills shall be taught at the outset. The desired trainer to student ratio shall be one (1) trainer for every seven (7) students. The work experience and skills training component shall be coordinated to the maximum extent feasible with preapprenticeship and apprenticeship programs.

(iii) Assistance in attaining post secondary education and required financial aid shall be made available to participants before graduation.

(c) Counseling services designed to assist participants to positively participate in society, which should include all of the following if necessary: outreach, assessment and orientation; individual and peer counseling; life skills training; drug and alcohol abuse education and prevention; and referral to appropriate drug rehabilitation, medical, mental health, legal, housing, and other services and resources in the community. The desired counselor to participant ratio shall be one (1) counselor for every twenty-eight (28) students.

(d) Leadership development training that provides participants with meaningful opportunities to develop leadership skills such as decision making, problem solving and negotiating. The program must also encourage participants to develop strong peer group ties that support their mutual pursuit of skills and values. All programs must establish a youth council in which participants are afforded opportunities to develop public speaking and negotiating skills, and management and policy making participation in specific aspects of the program.

(e) A training subsidy, living allowance or stipend that is no less than the minimum wage must be provided to program participants for the time spent at the work site in construction training. For those participants who receive public assistance, this training subsidy, living allowance, or stipend will not affect their housing benefits, medical benefits, child care
benefits or food stamp benefits. Stipends and wages may be distributed in a manner that offers incentives for good performance.

(f) Full-time participation in a Youthbuild program shall be offered for a period of not less than six (6) months and not more than twenty-four (24) months.

(g) A concentrated effort shall be made to find construction, construction-related, and nonconstruction jobs for all graduates of the program who have performed well. The skills training curriculum shall provide participants with basic preparation for seeking and maintaining a job. Follow-up counseling and assistance in job seeking also shall be provided to participants for twenty (12) months following graduation from the program.

(h) All programs serving twenty-eight (28) trainees or more are required to have a full-time director responsible for the coordination of all aspects of the Youthbuild program.

SECTION 5. Implementation grants may be used to carry out the activities listed in Section 4 of this act. Other eligible activities include the following:

(a) Legal fees for housing acquisition.

(b) Administrative costs of the applicant, which may not exceed fifteen percent (15%) of the amount of assistance provided, or such higher percentage as the director determines is necessary to support capacity development of a private nonprofit community-based organization.

(c) Defraying costs for the ongoing training and technical assistance needs of the recipients that are related to developing and carrying out the Youthbuild program, including the following: The director may reserve up to five percent (5%) of the Mississippi Youthbuild program appropriations to enter into a contract with Youthbuild USA to provide assistance to the director in providing training and technical assistance to, or in the
management, supervision, and coordination of, Youthbuild programs under this act.

SECTION 6. Eligible participants are youth sixteen (16) to twenty-four (24) years old who are economically disadvantaged as defined in 29 USCS Section 1503, and who are part of one (1) of the following groups:

(a) Persons who are not attending any school and have not received a secondary school diploma or its equivalent.

(b) Persons currently enrolled in a traditional or alternative school setting or a GED program and who are in danger of dropping out of school.

(c) Very low-income persons.

Up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the participants in the program may be individuals who do not meet the requirements of paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of this section, but who have educational needs despite the attainment of a high school diploma.

SECTION 7. (1) Those eligible to be awarded funds under this act are not-for-profit private agencies, or public agencies with experience operating a Youthbuild program or with a plan to incubate a Youthbuild program until it can be established as a not-for-profit private agency.

(2) Priority in the awarding of funds under this act shall be given to applicants with experience in operating Youthbuild programs. Organizations claiming to have operated Youthbuild programs must be licensed by Youthbuild USA or be organizations that have received federal HUD Youthbuild funding.

SECTION 8. The director shall require that an application for Youthbuild funds under this act contain at a minimum:

(a) A request for an implementation grant, specifying the amount of the grant requested and its proposed uses;

(b) A description of the applicant and a statement of its qualifications, including a description of the applicant's past experience running a Youthbuild program, and with housing
rehabilitation or construction and with youth and youth education,
youth leadership development and employment training programs, and
its relationship with local unions and youth apprenticeship
programs and other community groups;

(c) A description of the proposed construction site for
the program and evidence of site control;

(d) A description of the educational and job training
activities, work opportunities and other services that will be
provided to participants;

(e) A description of the proposed construction or
rehabilitation activities to be undertaken and the anticipated
schedule for carrying out those activities;

(f) A description of the manner in which eligible
youths will be recruited and selected, including a description of
the arrangements that will be made with community-based
organizations, local education agencies, including agencies of
Native American nations, public assistance agencies, the courts of
jurisdiction for status and youth offenders, shelters for homeless
individuals and other agencies that serve homeless youth, foster
care agencies, and other appropriate public and private agencies;

(g) A description of the special efforts that will be
undertaken to recruit eligible young women (including young women
with dependent children) with appropriate supports, especially
childcare;

(h) A description of how the proposed program will be
coordinated with other federal, state, and local activities and
activities conducted by Native American nations, including public
schools, national service, crime prevention programs, vocational,
adult, and bilingual education programs and job training;

(i) Assurances that there will be a sufficient number
of adequately trained supervisory personnel in the program who
have attained the level of journeyman or its equivalent;
(j) A description of the applicant's relationship with any local building trade unions that may exist, regarding their involvement in training, and the relationship of the Youthbuild program with established apprenticeship programs;

(k) A description of activities that will be undertaken to develop the leadership skills of participants, including their role in decision making;

(l) A detailed budget and a description of the systems of fiscal controls and auditing and accountability procedures that will be used to ensure fiscal soundness;

(m) A description of any contracts and arrangements entered into between the applicant and other agencies and entities including all in-kind donations and grants from both public and private entities that will serve to augment funds appropriated for this act;

(n) Identification and description of the financing proposed for any acquisition of the property, rehabilitation or construction;

(o) Identification and description of the entity that will operate and manage the property;

(p) A certification that the applicant will comply with the requirements of the Fair Housing Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and will affirmatively further fair housing; and

(q) The qualifications and past experience of the person who will fill the full-time director position.

SECTION 9. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2003.