

By: Representatives Hines, Buck, Fleming,  
Fredericks, Holloway, Whittington

To: Public Health and Human  
Services

HOUSE BILL NO. 1460

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE HEALTH OFFICER TO DEVELOP A PLAN  
2 TO CLOSE THE GAP IN DISPARITIES IN THE HEALTH STATUS OF ALL RACIAL  
3 AND ETHNIC GROUPS; TO REQUIRE A STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT; TO ESTABLISH  
4 MEASURABLE OUTCOMES; TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE; TO PROVIDE  
5 FOR THE SELECTION OF CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS TO DEVELOP CRITERIA AND  
6 PROCEDURES TO CARRY OUT THE PURPOSES OF THIS ACT; TO COORDINATE  
7 WITH OTHER PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES; TO REQUIRE EVALUATIONS AND  
8 REPORTS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

10 **SECTION 1.** It is the goal of the state by 2010, to decrease  
11 the disparities in all gender and racial groups in many diseases  
12 and preventable conditions. In order to achieve this and other  
13 measurable outcomes, the State Health Officer shall establish a  
14 program to close the gap in the health status in all racial and  
15 ethnic groups in the following priority areas: infant mortality,  
16 breast and cervical cancer screening, HIV/AIDS and sexually  
17 transmitted diseases, adult and child immunizations,  
18 cardiovascular disease, diabetes, accidental injuries and  
19 violence.

20 **SECTION 2.** The State Health Officer, in partnership with  
21 community based organizations and partners specializing in health  
22 disparities in all gender and racial groups shall develop a  
23 comprehensive, coordinated plan to reduce health disparities in  
24 the health disparity priority areas identified in Section 1 of  
25 this act.

26 **SECTION 3.** The State Health Officer shall review current  
27 data to support a statewide assessment of the risk behaviors  
28 associated with the health disparity priority areas identified in  
29 Section 1 of this act. The statewide assessment shall consist of  
30 focus groups, needs assessment surveys and key informant

31 interviews. The statewide assessment must be used to establish a  
32 baseline to measure the effect of activities that may be funded in  
33 future legislation. To the extent feasible, the assessment shall  
34 be conducted so that the results may be compared to national data.

35 **SECTION 4.** The State Health Officer, in consultation with  
36 community based organizations and partners, shall establish  
37 measurable outcomes to achieve the goal specified in Section 1 of  
38 this act.

39 **SECTION 5.** The State Health Officer shall subcontract with  
40 an entity specializing in health disparities, with at least four  
41 (4) years experience and located in the State of Mississippi to  
42 provide the necessary expertise to ensure that the planning  
43 process is successful in reducing the health disparities  
44 identified in Section 1 of this act. The State Health Officer  
45 shall provide Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000.00) in  
46 funding to the subcontract organization to conduct the (a) needs  
47 assessment; (b) development of outcomes; and (c) to manage the  
48 planning process, coordination and evaluation.

49 **SECTION 6.** (a) The State Health Officer shall identify  
50 community based organizations and partners in all gender and  
51 racial groups, develop the criteria and procedures to select these  
52 organizations as planning partners and engage them in the process  
53 to plan to eliminate health disparities. At the time the  
54 community based organizations and partners are selected, the State  
55 Health Officer must inform these organizations of the intent and  
56 purpose of the outcomes to be jointly established according to  
57 Section 3 of this act; (b) the plan will include sections on  
58 morbidity and mortality for health disparities listed in Section 1  
59 of this act, a review and report of the statewide needs assessment  
60 process, measurable outcomes and a complete description of a  
61 community grant program for health disparities. The community  
62 grant program shall describe, but not be limited to, the funding

63 purpose, eligibility criteria and program requirements and  
64 activities.

65 **SECTION 7.** The State Health Officer shall coordinate the  
66 Closing the Gap program with other projects and initiatives funded  
67 from state and federal funds to avoid duplication and promote  
68 complementary efforts.

69 **SECTION 8.** The State Health Officer shall conduct a biennial  
70 evaluation of the Closing the Gap program.

71 **SECTION 9.** The State Health Officer shall submit a biennial  
72 report to the Legislature on the Closing the Gap program. The  
73 report must include information on activities that were conducted  
74 using grant funds, evaluation data, and outcome measures, if  
75 available.

76 **SECTION 10.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
77 and after July 1, 2006.