

By: Senator(s) Tollison

To: Judiciary, Division B

SENATE BILL NO. 2957

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 43-1-55, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
 2 DELETE THE REPEALERS ON VARIOUS OTHER SECTIONS OF LAW, INCLUDING  
 3 SECTION 43-21-261, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES FOR  
 4 CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE RECORDS OF THE YOUTH COURT; SECTION  
 5 43-21-353, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH IMPOSES A DUTY TO  
 6 REPORT A REASONABLE SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT; SECTION  
 7 43-21-355, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES IMMUNITY TO  
 8 ANYONE WHO REPORTS IN GOOD FAITH SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT;  
 9 SECTION 43-21-603, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH CREATES THE  
 10 DISPOSITION HEARING PROCEDURES FOR YOUTH COURT; SECTION 93-21-23,  
 11 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH PROVIDES GOOD FAITH IMMUNITY TO  
 12 ANYONE REPORTING DOMESTIC ABUSE; AND SECTION 93-3-7, MISSISSIPPI  
 13 CODE OF 1972, WHICH IS THE CRIMINAL STATUTE CREATING AS OFFENSES  
 14 THE CRIMES OF SIMPLE AND AGGRAVATED ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC ABUSE;  
 15 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

17 **SECTION 1.** Section 43-1-55, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
 18 amended as follows:

19 43-1-55. (1) The Office of Family and Children's Services  
 20 shall devise formal social worker standards for employment and  
 21 service delivery designed to measure the quality of services  
 22 delivered to clients, as well as the timeliness of services. Each  
 23 social worker shall be assessed annually by a supervisor who is  
 24 knowledgeable in the standards promulgated. The standards shall  
 25 be applicable to all social workers working under the office.

26 (2) The Office of Family and Children's Services shall  
 27 devise formal standards for child protection specialists of the  
 28 Department of Human Services who are not licensed social workers.  
 29 Those standards shall require that:

30 (a) In order to be employed as a child protection  
 31 specialist, a person must have a bachelor's degree in either  
 32 psychology, sociology, nursing, criminal justice or a related  
 33 field, or a graduate degree in either law, psychology, sociology,

34 nursing, criminal justice or a related field. The determination  
35 of what is a related field shall be made by certification of the  
36 State Personnel Board; and

37 (b) Before a person may provide services as a child  
38 protection specialist, the person shall complete four (4) weeks of  
39 intensive training provided by the training unit of the Office of  
40 Family and Children's Services, and shall take and receive a  
41 passing score on the certification test administered by the  
42 training unit upon completion of the four-week training. Upon  
43 receiving a passing score on the certification test, the person  
44 shall be certified as a child protection specialist by the  
45 Department of Human Services. Any person who does not receive a  
46 passing score on the certification test shall not be employed or  
47 maintain employment as a child protection specialist for the  
48 department. Further, a person, qualified as a child protection  
49 specialist through the procedures set forth above, shall not  
50 conduct forensic interviews of children until the specialist  
51 receives additional specialized training in child forensic  
52 interview protocols and techniques by a course or curriculum  
53 approved by the Department of Human Services to be not less than  
54 forty (40) hours.

55 (3) For the purpose of providing services in child abuse or  
56 neglect cases, youth court proceedings, vulnerable adults cases,  
57 and such other cases as designated by the Executive Director of  
58 Human Services, the caseworker or service provider may be a child  
59 protection specialist whose work is overseen by a licensed social  
60 worker.

61 (4) The Department of Human Services and the Office of  
62 Family and Children's Services shall seek to employ and use  
63 licensed social workers to provide the services of the office, and  
64 may employ and use child protection specialists to provide those  
65 services only in counties in which there is not a sufficient

66 number of licensed social workers to adequately provide those  
67 services in the county.

68 (5) This section and Sections \* \* \* 43-27-109 and  
69 43-47-7 \* \* \* shall stand repealed on July 1, 2006.

70 **SECTION 2.** It is the intent of the Legislature that Sections  
71 43-21-261, 43-21-353, 43-21-355, 43-21-603, 93-21-23 and 97-3-7,  
72 Mississippi Code of 1972, will not be repealed by operation of  
73 Section 43-1-55, and that the amendments contained in this bill  
74 will be integrated into any other amendments to Section 43-1-55,  
75 without regard to the effective date of the other act or acts.

76 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
77 and after its passage.