

By: Representatives Akins, Holland, Eaton,  
Rotenberry, Gadd, Lane, Turner

To: Education

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE  
FOR  
HOUSE BILL NO. 1267

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE CARING FOR MISSISSIPPI INDIVIDUALS WITH  
2 AUTISM TASK FORCE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK  
3 FORCE; TO SET FORTH THE DUTIES OF THE TASK FORCE; AND FOR RELATED  
4 PURPOSES.

5 WHEREAS, autism is a complex developmental disability that  
6 typically appears during the first three (3) years of life and is  
7 part of a group of disorders known as Autism Spectrum Disorders  
8 (ASD); and

9 WHEREAS, as of the effective date of this act, at least one  
10 (1) in one hundred sixty-six (166) individuals in the United  
11 States is diagnosed with autism, making it more common than the  
12 occurrences in our population of pediatric cancer, diabetes, and  
13 AIDS combined; and

14 WHEREAS, autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and  
15 relate to others; is associated with rigid routines and repetitive  
16 behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very  
17 specific routines; is four (4) times more likely to strike boys  
18 than girls; and occurs in all racial, ethnic and social groups;  
19 and

20 WHEREAS, symptoms of the disability can range from very mild  
21 to quite severe, and autistic behaviors not only make life  
22 difficult for those individuals who suffer from the disability,  
23 but also make life hard for their families, health care providers  
24 and teachers; and

25 WHEREAS, families coping with this devastating illness are  
26 searching for answers about its causes, diagnosis, prevention and  
27 treatment, and while there is no known means to prevent the  
28 disability, there are indications that early intervention in an

29 appropriate educational setting for at least two (2) years during  
30 the preschool years can result in significant improvements for  
31 many young children with the disorder; and

32 WHEREAS, the Mississippi Legislature recognizes that  
33 strategies for how to best identify, treat and accommodate the  
34 needs of individuals with autism and of their families are  
35 urgently needed in our state; NOW, THEREFORE,

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

37 **SECTION 1.** (1) The Caring for Mississippi Individuals with  
38 Autism Task Force is created to study and make recommendations to  
39 the Mississippi Legislature regarding the growing incidence of  
40 autism and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), how to identify, treat  
41 and accommodate the needs of individuals with autism and ASD, and  
42 ways to improve the delivery and coordination of state services  
43 provided to individuals with autism and ASD. Members of the task  
44 force shall be composed of the following:

45 (a) Three (3) persons who are the parents of children  
46 with autism or ASD, with one (1) such person to be appointed by  
47 the Governor, one (1) to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor,  
48 and one (1) to be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

49 (b) One (1) person who is a member of the governing  
50 body of a school district, to be appointed by the State  
51 Superintendent of Public Education;

52 (c) One (1) person who represents the State Department  
53 of Education, to be appointed by the State Superintendent of  
54 Public Education;

55 (d) One (1) person who is the director of special  
56 education services in a school district, to be appointed by the  
57 State Superintendent of Public Education;

58 (e) One (1) person who is a representative of the State  
59 Department of Mental Health, to be appointed by the executive  
60 director of the department;

61 (f) Three (3) persons who are representatives of the  
62 State Department of Mental Health who are from regions in the  
63 state that provide services to individuals with autism or ASD, to  
64 be appointed by the executive director of the department;

65 (g) One (1) person who is a representative of the  
66 University of Mississippi Medical Center and who provides medical  
67 or other services to individuals with autism or ASD, to be  
68 appointed by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi  
69 Medical Center;

70 (h) Two (2) persons who are Mississippi pediatricians  
71 engaged in the private practice of medicine and who provide  
72 treatment to individuals with autism or ASD, to be appointed by  
73 the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical  
74 Center.

75 (2) The task force shall:

76 (a) Review the best practices of other states with  
77 regard to educational, medical and early intervention services  
78 provided to individuals diagnosed with autism or ASD and identify  
79 the best practices of other states;

80 (b) Review the standard of services provided by local  
81 Mississippi school districts and early intervention programs to  
82 individuals diagnosed with autism or ASD, identify any additional  
83 potential funding sources for school districts, and identify  
84 guidelines for measurable educational and instructional goals that  
85 can be used by members of the education community for serving  
86 children with autism or ASD;

87 (c) Assess the medical availability of services  
88 currently provided for early screening, diagnosis and treatment of  
89 autism and ASD and provide recommendations for enhancing medical  
90 services;

91 (d) Identify the role of higher education in developing  
92 a workforce in Mississippi possessing the skills necessary to  
93 assist individuals with autism or ASD in medical, educational, and

94 vocational efforts or in providing additional services associated  
95 with autism or ASD;

96 (e) Evaluate and identify any and all additional  
97 relevant information and make legislative recommendations  
98 regarding the development and implementation of a continuum of  
99 educational and medical services for individuals with autism or  
100 ASD; and

101 (f) File a report with those standing committees of the  
102 Mississippi State Legislature and with those state agencies having  
103 jurisdiction over specific recommendations of the task force, not  
104 later than December 1, 2007.

105 (3) The task force shall hold its first meeting not later  
106 than April 1, 2007, with the date, time and location of the  
107 meeting to be designated by the Governor. At that first meeting,  
108 the task force shall elect from among its membership a chairman,  
109 vice chairman and any other officers determined to be necessary,  
110 and shall set the date, time and location of its next meeting.

111 (4) The State Department of Mental Health shall provide the  
112 staff and other support necessary for the Caring for Mississippi  
113 Individuals with Autism Task Force to perform its duties.

114 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
115 and after its passage.