

By: Senator(s) Chaney

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2667

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-51, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO ENACT "THE EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT OF 2007," TO
3 AUTHORIZE AND DIRECT THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO IMPLEMENT
4 A VOLUNTARY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM BY
5 SUBCONTRACTING WITH HEAD START, LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTERS AND
6 LICENSED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOL PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS, TO
7 PROVIDE FOR THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDS, TO PROVIDE A GRANT
8 APPLICATION PROCESS, TO PROVIDE FOR A GRANT APPLICATION OVERSIGHT
9 COMMITTEE, TO PROVIDE CERTAIN CONDITIONS ON APPROVED PROGRAMS, AND
10 TO PROVIDE THAT THE GRANTS ARE SUBJECT TO LEGISLATIVE
11 APPROPRIATION; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

13 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-21-51, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
14 amended as follows:

15 37-21-51. (1) As used in Sections 37-21-51 through
16 37-21-55, the term "preschool or prekindergarten children" means
17 any children who have not entered kindergarten.

18 (2) To ensure that all children have access to quality early
19 childhood education and development services, the Legislature
20 finds and declares the following:

21 (a) Parents have the primary duty to educate their
22 young preschool children;

23 (b) The State of Mississippi can assist and educate
24 parents in their role as the primary caregivers and educators of
25 young preschool children; and

26 (c) There is a need to explore innovative approaches
27 and strategies for aiding parents and families in the education
28 and development of young preschool children.

29 (3) (a) This subsection shall be known and may be cited as
30 the "Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2007."

31 (b) The Mississippi Department of Human Services shall
32 implement a voluntary early care and education grant program,
33 which shall be a collaboration among the entities providing
34 prekindergarten programs including Head Start, licensed child care
35 facilities and licensed public and private school prekindergarten
36 programs. Under this program, eligible entities may submit an
37 application for funds to (i) defray the cost of additional
38 teaching staff at the rate of pay provided to state certified
39 teaching staff, appropriate educational materials and equipment
40 and to improve the quality of educational experiences offered to
41 four-year-old children in existing licensed early care and
42 education programs, and/or to (ii) extend developmentally
43 appropriate education services at such existing licensed programs
44 serving four-year-old children to include practices of high
45 quality instruction, and to (iii) administer, implement, monitor
46 and evaluate the programs. Grant funds shall be provided on a
47 local entity matching fund basis to be determined by the
48 Department of Human Services.

49 (c) The Department of Human Services shall contract
50 with an appropriate early care and education program entity to
51 serve as the fiscal agent for the program. All grant applicants
52 shall be required to collaborate with other early care and
53 education programs, provide a local community match to the grant
54 award, designate one (1) entity as fiscal agent for the grant,
55 meet teacher qualifications and meet teacher and assistant teacher
56 salary levels based on the Mississippi Adequate Education Program
57 Salary Scale provided under Section 37-19-7 for teachers whose
58 salary is provided under the grant program.

59 (d) The early care and education program grants shall
60 be awarded to successful applicants who meet the criteria
61 developed by a committee appointed by the Governor, consisting of,
62 but not limited to, representatives of the Mississippi Department
63 of Human Services Office for Children and Youth, the Mississippi

64 Head Start Association, the Mississippi Head Start Collaboration
65 Office, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi
66 State Department of Health Child Care Licensure Division and
67 licensed child care facilities in the state. The committee shall
68 meet upon call of the Governor and shall organize for business by
69 electing a chairman. Administrative and clerical support for the
70 committee shall be provided by the Department of Human Services.
71 The committee shall establish grant application criteria,
72 procedures and deadlines. The criteria must include all
73 conditions prescribed in paragraph (c), and shall include, but not
74 be limited to: voluntary enrollment of children, qualifications
75 and salary range for teachers and assistant teachers, allowed
76 expenses, children with special needs, use of a research-based
77 curriculum aligned with the learning objectives/milestones in the
78 Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Four-Year-Old Children,
79 teacher/child ratios, child care facility licensure requirements,
80 and collaboration with other early childhood programs.

81 (e) Any teacher, assistant teacher or other employee
82 whose salary and fringe benefits are paid from early care and
83 education grants under this act shall not be deemed to be
84 classified as state or local school district employees and shall
85 not be eligible for state health insurance benefits or membership
86 in the Public Employees' Retirement System.

87 (f) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated
88 therefore, the Department of Human Services shall administer the
89 development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the
90 early care and education grant program including the awards and
91 the application process. Funding shall be provided subject to
92 appropriation beginning with the 2008 fiscal year. The department
93 shall make an annual report to the Legislature and the Governor
94 regarding the effectiveness of the program.

95 (g) This subsection (3) shall stand repealed on July 1,
96 2010.

97 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
98 and after July 1, 2007.