

By: Senator(s) Chaney

To: Education;  
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2667  
(As Passed the Senate)

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, appropriate educational materials and equipment  
39 and to improve the quality of educational experiences offered to  
40 four-year-old children in existing licensed early care and  
41 education programs, and/or to (ii) extend developmentally  
42 appropriate education services at such existing licensed programs  
43 currently serving four-year-old children to include practices of  
44 high quality instruction, and to (iii) administer, implement,  
45 monitor and evaluate the programs. Grant funds shall be provided  
46 on a local entity matching fund basis to be determined by the  
47 Department of Human Services.

48           (c) The Department of Human Services shall contract  
49 with an appropriate early care and education program entity to  
50 serve as the fiscal agent for the program. All grant applicants  
51 shall be required to collaborate with other early care and  
52 education programs, provide a local community match to the grant  
53 award, designate one (1) entity as fiscal agent for the grant, and  
54 meet teacher qualifications.

55           (d) The early care and education program grants shall  
56 be awarded to successful applicants who meet the criteria  
57 developed by a committee appointed by the Governor, consisting of,  
58 but not limited to, representatives of the Mississippi Department  
59 of Human Services Office for Children and Youth, the Mississippi  
60 Head Start Association, the Mississippi Head Start Collaboration  
61 Office, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi  
62 State Department of Health Child Care Licensure Division and  
63 licensed child care facilities in the state. The committee shall

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

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

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

91 (g) This subsection (3) shall stand repealed on July 1,  
92 2010.

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