

By: Senator(s) Chaney

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2667
(As Sent to Governor)

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, parochial and private school
36 prekindergarten programs. Enrollment in the preschool or
37 prekindergarten program shall be coordinated with the Head Start
38 agencies in the local areas and shall not be permitted to cause a
39 reduction in children served by the Head Start program. Under
40 this program, eligible entities may submit an application for
41 funds to (i) defray the cost of additional teaching staff,
42 appropriate educational materials and equipment and to improve the
43 quality of educational experiences offered to four-year-old
44 children in existing licensed early care and education programs,
45 and/or to (ii) extend developmentally appropriate education
46 services at such existing licensed programs currently serving
47 four-year-old children to include practices of high quality
48 instruction, and to (iii) administer, implement, monitor and
49 evaluate the programs. Grant funds shall be provided on a local
50 entity matching fund basis to be determined by the Department of
51 Human Services.

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

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, one (1) of which must have a
68 majority low-income population, in the state. The committee shall
69 meet upon call of the Governor and shall organize for business by
70 electing a chairman. Administrative and clerical support for the
71 committee shall be provided by the Department of Human Services.
72 The committee shall establish grant application criteria,
73 procedures and deadlines. The criteria must include all
74 conditions prescribed in paragraph (c), and shall include, but not
75 be limited to: voluntary enrollment of children, qualifications
76 for teachers and assistant teachers, allowed expenses, children
77 with special needs, use of a research-based curriculum aligned
78 with the learning objectives/milestones in the Mississippi Early
79 Learning Guidelines for Four-Year-Old Children, teacher/child
80 ratios, child care facility licensure requirements, and
81 collaboration with other early childhood programs.

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

88 (f) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated
89 therefor, the Department of Human Services shall administer the
90 implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the early care and
91 education grant program including the awards and the application
92 process. The State Department of Education, Office of Reading,
93 Early Childhood and Language Arts, in partnership with the
94 Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and
95 Youth, shall develop educational criteria regarding research-based
96 curriculum, the state's early learning guidelines and

97 developmentally appropriate educational services. Funding shall
98 be provided subject to appropriation beginning with the 2008
99 fiscal year. The department shall make an annual report to the
100 Legislature and the Governor regarding the effectiveness of the
101 program.

102 (g) This subsection (3) shall stand repealed on July 1,
103 2010.

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