

By: Senator(s) Butler (38th)

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2061

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-51, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
2 TO PROVIDE THAT THE LEGISLATURE SHALL FUND THE EARLY LEARNING
3 COLLABORATIVE ACT OF 2007; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

7 37-21-51. (1) As used in Sections 37-21-51 through
8 37-21-55, the term "preschool or prekindergarten children" means
9 any children who have not entered kindergarten.

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

13 (a) Parents have the primary duty to educate their
14 young preschool children;

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

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

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

23 (b) The Mississippi Department of Human Services shall
24 implement a voluntary early care and education grant program,
25 which shall be a collaboration among the entities providing
26 prekindergarten programs including Head Start, licensed child care
27 facilities and licensed public, parochial and private school



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

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

51 (d) The early care and education program grants shall
52 be awarded to successful applicants who meet the criteria
53 developed by a committee appointed by the Governor, consisting of,
54 but not limited to, representatives of the Mississippi Department
55 of Human Services Office for Children and Youth, the Mississippi
56 Head Start Association, the Mississippi Head Start Collaboration
57 Office, the Mississippi Department of Education, the Mississippi
58 State Department of Health Child Care Licensure Division and
59 licensed child care facilities, one (1) of which must have a
60 majority low-income population, in the state. The committee shall



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

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

80 (f) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated
81 therefor, the Department of Human Services shall administer the
82 implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the early care and
83 education grant program including the awards and the application
84 process. The State Department of Education, Office of Reading,
85 Early Childhood and Language Arts, in partnership with the
86 Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and
87 Youth, shall develop educational criteria regarding research-based
88 curriculum, the state's early learning guidelines and
89 developmentally appropriate educational services. Funding shall
90 be provided subject to appropriation beginning with the 2008
91 fiscal year. The department shall make an annual report to the
92 Legislature and the Governor regarding the effectiveness of the
93 program.



94 (g) The Legislature shall appropriate Twenty Million
95 Dollars (\$20,000,000.00) for fiscal year 2013 to fund the Early
96 Learning Collaborative Act of 2007.

97 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
98 and after July 1, 2012.

