

By: Representatives Reynolds, Moak, Calhoun,
Watson

To: Education;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 668

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI ENHANCED EARLY CHILDHOOD
2 EDUCATION PILOT PROGRAM (MEECEPP); TO PROVIDE THAT THE PROGRAM
3 SHALL BE FIRST MADE AVAILABLE DURING THE 2013-2014 SCHOOL YEAR ON
4 A VOLUNTARY BASIS; TO REQUIRE THE PILOT PROGRAM TO FIRST BE MADE
5 AVAILABLE TO ELIGIBLE CHILDREN FROM FIVE PILOT SCHOOLS SELECTED BY
6 THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION IN EACH OF THE FOUR CONGRESSIONAL
7 DISTRICTS; TO PROVIDE FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE PILOT PROGRAM
8 SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS; TO PROVIDE THAT PRIORITY
9 ENROLLMENT INTO THE PILOT PROGRAM SHALL BE GIVEN TO AT-RISK
10 FOUR-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN; TO PROVIDE PARENTS THE OPTION OF HAVING A
11 CHILD ACCEPTED IN THE PROGRAM TO ATTEND EITHER A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE
12 FACILITY FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTRUCTION; TO REQUIRE THE PARENT TO
13 COMPLETE AND SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO THE APPROVED PROVIDER OF
14 CHOICE AND PRESCRIBE THE INFORMATION REQUIRED TO ACCOMPANY THE
15 APPLICATION; TO PRESCRIBE THE REQUIRED DAILY INSTRUCTIONAL TIME OF
16 SIX AND ONE-HALF HOURS AND THE YEARLY DURATION OF THE SCHOOL TERM
17 OF 180 DAYS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE PROGRAM SHALL BE ADMINISTERED BY
18 THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
19 SERVICES AND PRESCRIBE THE DUTIES OF EACH RELATING TO OPERATIONS
20 OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROVIDERS; TO ESTABLISH THE MINIMUM
21 QUALIFICATION FOR LEAD TEACHERS AND TEACHER ASSISTANTS EMPLOYED
22 WITH A PUBLIC OR PRIVATE PROVIDER; TO REQUIRE ALL PERSONNEL
23 PROVIDING INSTRUCTION AND CLASSROOM SUPPORT TO STUDENTS
24 PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT PROGRAM TO HAVE A MINIMUM OF FIFTEEN
25 HOURS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ANNUALLY; TO PROVIDE FOR THE
26 MANNER OF TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED TO STUDENTS AND STIPULATION ON
27 PARENTS FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING A SCHOOL OUTSIDE OF THE DISTRICT;
28 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

30 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is created the Mississippi Enhanced
31 Early Childhood Education Pilot Program (MEECEPP). This program



32 shall be first made available for the 2013-2014 school year on a
33 voluntary basis and shall focus on the developmental and learning
34 support that children must have in order to be ready for school
35 and must incorporate parenting education.

36 (2) Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, with funds
37 appropriated by the Legislature, the Mississippi Enhanced Early
38 Childhood Education Pilot Program shall first be made available to
39 eligible children from five (5) pilot schools selected by the
40 State Board of Education in each of the four (4) congressional
41 districts. With any remaining funds available, the pilot program
42 shall be expanded to additional schools within each congressional
43 district, such schools having a poverty index of ninety percent
44 (90%) or greater. Priority shall be given to implementing the
45 program first in those of districts having proportionally the
46 largest population of underserved at-risk four-year-old children.
47 Unexpended funds from the prior fiscal year for this program shall
48 be carried forward and shall remain in the program. In rare
49 instances, students with documented kindergarten readiness
50 barriers may be permitted to enroll for a second year, or at age
51 five (5) years, at the discretion of the State Department of
52 Education for students being served by a public provider or at the
53 discretion of the Department of Human Services for students being
54 served by a private provider.

55 (3) Each child residing in the pilot districts, who will
56 have attained the age of four (4) years on or before September 1,



57 of the school year, and meets the at-risk criteria is eligible for
58 enrollment in the Mississippi Enhanced Early Childhood Education
59 Pilot Program for one (1) year. The parent of each eligible child
60 may enroll the child in one (1) of the following programs:

61 (a) A school-year four-year-old kindergarten program
62 delivered by an approved public provider; or

63 (b) A school-year four-year-old kindergarten program
64 delivered by an approved private provider. The parent enrolling a
65 child must complete and submit an application to the approved
66 provider of choice. The application must be submitted on forms
67 and must be accompanied by a copy of the child's birth
68 certificate, immunization documentation, and documentation of the
69 student's eligibility as evidenced by family income documentation
70 showing an annual family income of one hundred eighty-five percent
71 (185%) or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated
72 annually by the United States Department of Health and Human
73 Services or a statement of Medicaid eligibility. In submitting an
74 application for enrollment, the parent agrees to comply with
75 provider attendance policies during the school year. The
76 attendance policy must state that the program consists of six and
77 one-half (6-1/2) hours of instructional time daily and operates
78 for a period of not less than one hundred eighty (180) days per
79 year. Under program guidelines, noncompliance with attendance
80 policies may result in removal from the program. No parent is
81 required to pay tuition or fees solely for the purpose of



82 enrolling in or attending the program established under this
83 section. Nothing in this section prohibits charging fees for
84 childcare that may be provided outside the times of the
85 instructional day provided in these programs. If by October 1 of
86 the school year at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the total
87 number of eligible MEECEPP children in a district or county are
88 projected to be enrolled in MEECEPP, Head Start or ABC Child Care
89 Program as determined by the State Department of Education,
90 MEECEPP providers may then enroll pay-lunch children who score at
91 or below the twenty-fifth (25th) national percentile on two (2) of
92 the three (3) DIAL-3 subscales and may receive reimbursement for
93 these children if funds are available.

94 (4) Public school providers choosing to participate in the
95 program must submit an application to the State Department of
96 Education. Private providers choosing to participate in the
97 Mississippi Four-Year-Old Child Development Kindergarten Program
98 must submit a joint application to the State Department of
99 Education and the Department of Human Services. The application
100 must be submitted on the forms prescribed, contain assurances that
101 the provider meets all program criteria set forth in this section,
102 and will comply with all reporting and assessment requirements.
103 Providers shall:

104 (a) Comply with all federal and state laws and
105 constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination on the basis



106 of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin,
107 religion, ancestry, or need for special education services;

108 (b) Comply with all state and local health and safety
109 laws and codes;

110 (c) Comply with all state laws that apply regarding
111 criminal background checks for employees and exclude from
112 employment any individual not permitted by state law to work with
113 children;

114 (d) Be accountable for meeting the education needs of
115 the child and report at least quarterly to the parent/guardian on
116 his progress;

117 (e) Comply with all program, reporting, and assessment
118 criteria required of providers;

119 (f) Maintain individual student records for each child
120 enrolled in the program to include, but not be limited to:

121 (i) Assessment data;

122 (ii) Health data;

123 (iii) Records of teacher observations; and

124 (iv) Records of parent or guardian and teacher
125 conferences;

126 (g) Designate whether extended day services will be
127 offered to the parents/guardians of children participating in the
128 program;

129 (h) Be approved, registered, or licensed by the
130 Department of Human Services; and



131 (i) comply with all state and federal laws and
132 requirements specific to program providers.

133 **SECTION 2.** Public providers may limit student enrollment
134 based upon space available. However, if enrollment exceeds
135 available space, providers shall enroll children with first
136 priority given to children with the lowest scores on an approved
137 pre-kindergarten readiness assessment. Private providers shall
138 not be required to expand their programs to accommodate all
139 children desiring enrollment. However, private providers are
140 encouraged to keep a waiting list for students they are unable to
141 serve because of space limitations.

142 **SECTION 3.** (1) The State Department of Education shall:

143 (a) Develop the provider application form;

144 (b) Develop the child enrollment application form;

145 (c) Develop a list of approved research-based preschool
146 curricula for use in the program based upon the Mississippi
147 Content Standards, and provide training and technical assistance
148 to support its effective use in approved classrooms serving
149 children;

150 (d) Develop a list of approved pre-kindergarten
151 readiness assessments to be used in conjunction with the program,
152 and provide assessments and technical assistance to support
153 assessment administration in approved classrooms serving children;

154 (e) Establish criteria for awarding new classroom
155 equipping grants;



156 (f) Establish criteria for the parenting education
157 program providers must offer;

158 (g) Establish a list of early childhood related fields
159 that may be used in meeting the lead teacher qualifications;

160 (h) Develop a list of data collection needs to be used
161 in implementation and evaluation of the program;

162 (i) Identify teacher preparation program options and
163 assist lead teachers in meeting teacher program requirements;

164 (j) Establish criteria for granting student retention
165 waivers; and

166 (k) Establish criteria for granting classroom size
167 requirements waivers.

168 (2) Providers of the Mississippi Enhanced Early Childhood
169 Education Pilot Program shall offer a complete educational program
170 in accordance with age-appropriate instructional practice and a
171 research-based preschool curriculum aligned with school success.
172 The program must focus on the developmental and learning support
173 children must have in order to be ready for school. The provider
174 must also incorporate parenting education that promotes the school
175 readiness of preschool children by strengthening parent
176 involvement in the learning process with an emphasis on
177 interactive literacy. Providers shall offer high-quality,
178 center-based programs that must include, but shall not be limited
179 to:



180 (a) Employment of a lead teacher with an associate
181 degree in early childhood education or related field or be granted
182 a waiver of this requirement from the State Department of
183 Education;

184 (b) Employment of an education assistant with
185 pre-service or in-service training in early childhood education;

186 (c) Maintaining classrooms with at least ten (10)
187 four-year-old children, but no more than twenty (20) four-year-old
188 children with an adult to child ratio of 1:10. With classrooms
189 having a minimum of ten (10) children, the 1:10 ratio must be a
190 lead teacher to child ratio. Waivers of the minimum class size
191 requirement may be granted by the State Department of Education
192 for public providers or by both the State Department of Education
193 and the Department of Human Services for private providers on a
194 case-by-case basis;

195 (d) Offering a full-day, center-based program with six
196 and one-half (6-1/2) hours of instruction daily for one hundred
197 eighty (180) school days;

198 (e) Providing an approved research-based preschool
199 curriculum that focuses on critical child development skills,
200 especially early literacy, numeracy, and social/emotional
201 development;

202 (f) Engaging parents' participation in their child's
203 educational experience that shall include a minimum of two (2)
204 documented conferences per year; and



205 (g) Adhering to professional development requirements.

206 **SECTION 4.** Every classroom providing services to
207 four-year-old children established under the provisions of this
208 act must have a lead teacher with at least an associate degree in
209 early childhood education or related field and who is enrolled and
210 is demonstrating progress toward the completion of a teacher
211 education program within four (4) years. Every classroom must
212 also have at least one (1) education assistant per classroom who
213 shall have the minimum of a high school diploma or the equivalent,
214 and at least two (2) years of experience working with children
215 under five (5) years old. The teaching assistant shall have
216 completed the basic coursework for Early Childhood Development
217 Credential (ECD) or enroll and complete this course within twelve
218 (12) months of hire. Providers may request waivers to the
219 credential requirement for those assistants who have demonstrated
220 sufficient experience in teaching children five (5) years old and
221 younger. The providers must request this waiver in writing to
222 their designated administrative agency and provide appropriate
223 documentation as to the qualifications of the teaching assistant.

224 **SECTION 5.** (1) The Legislature recognizes there is a strong
225 relationship between the skills and preparation of
226 pre-kindergarten instructors and the educational outcomes of
227 students. To improve these education outcomes, participating
228 providers shall require all personnel providing instruction and
229 classroom support to students participating in the Mississippi



230 Enhanced Early Childhood Education Pilot Program to participate
231 annually in a minimum of fifteen (15) hours of professional
232 development to include teaching children from poverty.
233 Professional development should provide instruction in strategies
234 and techniques to address the age-appropriate progress of
235 pre-kindergarten students in developing emergent literacy skills,
236 including, but not limited to, oral communication, knowledge of
237 print and letters, phonemic and phonological awareness, and
238 vocabulary and comprehension development.

239 (2) Both public and private providers shall be eligible for
240 transportation funds for the transportation of children to and
241 from school. Nothing within this section prohibits providers from
242 contracting with another entity to provide transportation services
243 provided the entities adhere to the requirements of Sections
244 37-41-29 and 37-41-31. Providers shall not be responsible for
245 transporting students attending programs outside the district
246 lines. Parents choosing program providers located outside of
247 their resident district shall be responsible for transportation.
248 When transporting four-year-old child development students,
249 providers shall make every effort to transport them with students
250 of similar ages attending the same school. Of the amount
251 appropriated for the program, not more than One Hundred
252 Eighty-five Dollars (\$185.00) per student shall be retained by the
253 State Department of Education for the purposes of transporting
254 four-year-old students.



255 **SECTION 5.** (1) For all private providers approved to offer
256 services under this act, the State Department of Education and the
257 Department of Human Services jointly shall:

258 (a) Serve as the fiscal agents;

259 (b) Verify student enrollment eligibility;

260 (c) Recruit, review, and approve eligible providers. In
261 considering approval of providers, consideration must be given to
262 the provider's availability of permanent space for program service
263 and whether temporary classroom space is necessary to provide
264 services to any children;

265 (d) Coordinate oversight, monitoring, technical
266 assistance, coordination, and training for classroom providers;

267 (e) Serve as a clearing house for information and best
268 practices related to four-year-old kindergarten programs;

269 (f) Receive, review, and approve new classroom grant
270 applications and make recommendations for approval based on
271 approved criteria;

272 (g) Coordinate activities and promote collaboration
273 with other private and public providers in developing and
274 supporting four-year-old kindergarten programs;

275 (h) Maintain a database of the children enrolled in the
276 program; and

277 (i) Promulgate guidelines as necessary for the
278 implementation of the pilot program.



279 (2) For all public school providers approved to offer
280 services under this act, the State Department of Education shall:

281 (a) Serve as the fiscal agent;

282 (b) Verify student enrollment eligibility;

283 (c) Recruit, review, and approve eligible providers.

284 In considering approval of providers, consideration must be given
285 to the provider's availability of permanent space for program
286 service and whether temporary classroom space is necessary to
287 provide services to any children;

288 (d) Coordinate oversight, monitoring, technical
289 assistance, coordination, and training for classroom providers;

290 (e) Serve as a clearing house for information and best
291 practices related to four-year-old kindergarten programs;

292 (f) Receive, review, and approve new classroom grant
293 applications and make recommendations for approval based on
294 approved criteria;

295 (g) Coordinate activities and promote collaboration
296 with other private and public providers in developing and
297 supporting four-year-old kindergarten programs;

298 (h) Maintain a database of the children enrolled in the
299 program; and

300 (i) Promulgate guidelines as necessary for the
301 implementation of the pilot program.

302 **SECTION 6.** (1) The Legislature shall provide funding for
303 the Mississippi Enhanced Early Childhood Education Pilot Program.



304 Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, the funded cost per
305 child shall be equal to or greater than the per pupil expenditure
306 for students enrolled in and attending public schools. Eligible
307 students enrolling with private providers during the school year
308 shall be funded on a pro rata basis determined by the length of
309 their enrollment. Private providers transporting eligible
310 children to and from school shall be eligible for a reimbursement
311 for each eligible child transported. Providers who are reimbursed
312 are required to retain records as required by their fiscal agent.
313 Funding to providers is contingent upon receipt of data as
314 requested by the State Department of Education and the Department
315 of Human Services.

316 **SECTION 7.** (1) Under the provisions of this act, the
317 Department of Human Services shall:

318 (a) Maintain a list of all approved public and private
319 providers; and

320 (b) Provide the State Department of Education
321 information necessary to carry out the requirements of this act.

322 (2) The Department of Human Services shall be responsible
323 for the collection and maintenance of data on the state funded
324 programs provided through private providers.

325 **SECTION 8.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
326 and after July 1, 2013.

