HOUSE BILL NO.  271

AN ACT TO CREATE THE HEALTH DISPARITIES COUNCIL IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDUCE AND ELIMINATE CERTAIN DISPARITIES IN ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP AND DUTIES OF THE COUNCIL; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) There is created the Health Disparities Council within, but not subject to the control of, the State Department of Health. The council shall make recommendations to reduce and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in access to quality health care and in health outcomes within the State of Mississippi, including disparities related to breast, cervical, prostate and colorectal cancers, strokes, heart attacks, heart disease, diabetes, infant mortality, lupus, HIV/AIDS, asthma and other respiratory illnesses. The council may consider environmental, housing and other relevant matters contributing to these disparities. The council shall make recommendations to increase racial and ethnic diversity in the health care workforce, including doctors, nurses and physician assistants. The council
shall maintain ongoing communication and coordination with the Office of Health Disparity Elimination of the State Department of Health.

(2) The council shall consist of forty (40) members to be appointed on or before October 1, 2016, as follows:

(a) Three (3) members of the Mississippi House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one (1) of whom shall be designated as a cochairman of the council;

(b) Three (3) members of the Mississippi Senate appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, one (1) of whom shall be designated as a cochairman of the council;

(c) The Executive Director of the Department of Human Services, or his designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(d) The State Health Officer, or his designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(e) The Director of the Office of Health Disparity Elimination in the State Department of Health, or his designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(f) The Executive Director of the State Department of Mental Health, or his designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(g) The Executive Director of the Division of Medicaid, or his designee, who shall serve ex officio;

(h) The Attorney General, or his designee, who shall serve ex officio;
Eight (8) persons from communities disproportionately affected by health disparities, four (4) of whom shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and four (4) of whom shall be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor; and

Twenty (20) persons appointed by the cochairmen, one (1) from each list of nominees submitted by each of the following organizations:

(i) The American Cancer Society, Mississippi Division, Inc.;
(ii) The American Heart Association, Mississippi Affiliate, Inc.;
(iii) The University of Mississippi Medical Center;
(iv) Baptist Medical Center;
(v) Central Mississippi Medical Center;
(vi) River Oaks Health System;
(vii) St. Dominic Hospital;
(viii) The Mississippi Primary Health Care Association, Inc.;
(ix) The Mississippi State Medical Association;
(x) The Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association;
(xi) The Mississippi Hospital Association;
(xii) The Mississippi School Nurse Association;
(xiii) The Mississippi Nurses’ Association;
(xiv) The Mississippi Association of Health Plans, Inc.;
(xv) Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi, Inc.;
(xvi) The Mississippi Public Health Association;
(xvii) The Center of Mississippi Health Policy;
(xviii) The Mississippi Health Policy Research Center at Mississippi State University;
(xix) The John C. Stennis Institute of Government at Mississippi State University; and
(xx) The Mississippi Health Advocacy Program.

The representatives of nongovernmental organizations shall serve staggered three-year terms. Vacancies of unexpired terms shall be filled within sixty (60) days by the appropriate appointing authority.

(3) At its first meeting, the council shall adopt bylaws and rules for its efficient operation. The council may establish committees that will be responsible for conducting specific council programs or activities.

(4) The council shall meet at least bimonthly, at other times as determined by its rules, and when requested either by both cochairmen or by one (1) cochairman and any nine (9) members. Ten (10) members of the council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. In the adoption of rules, resolutions
and reports, an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting shall be required. All meetings of the council and any committees of the council will be open to the public, with opportunities for public comment provided on a regular basis. Notice of all meetings shall be given as provided in the Open Meetings Act (Section 25-41-1 et seq.) and appropriate notice also shall be given to all persons so requesting of the date, time and place of each meeting.

(5) The council shall submit a report annually by July 1 to the Governor and to the members of the House Public Health and Human Services Committee and the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee. The report shall include:

(a) Data on disparities in health care access and health outcomes;
(b) Data on diversity in the health care workforce;
(c) Recommendations for designing, implementing and improving programs and services;
(d) Proposals for statutory and regulatory changes to reduce and eliminate disparities in access to quality health care services and health outcomes in the state; and
(e) Recommendations for improving diversity and cultural competency in the health care workforce.

(6) Members of the council shall receive no compensation for serving on the council, except for the eight (8) members appointed under subsection (2)(i) of this section, who shall be compensated...
at the per diem rate authorized by Section 25-3-69 and shall be reimbursed in accordance with Section 25-3-41 for mileage and actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. No council member may incur per diem, travel or other expenses unless previously authorized by vote, at a meeting of the council, which action must be recorded in the official minutes of the meeting.

(7) To effectuate the purposes of this section, any department, division, board, bureau, commission or agency of the state or any political subdivision thereof, shall, at the request of the cochairmen of the council, provide any facilities, assistance and data as will enable the council to properly carry out its duties.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2016.