SENATE BILL NO. 2274

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-53, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO ESTABLISH AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL TO COORDINATE PREKINDERGARTEN SERVICES AND TO PRESCRIBE THE POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE COUNCIL; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 37-21-53, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-21-53. (1) * * * The Early Childhood Services Interagency Coordinating Council is created to ensure coordination among the various agencies and programs serving preschool children in order to leverage resources, align processes, reduce duplication of effort, and strengthen the quality of all state and federally funded programs serving preschool-age children.

(2) The membership of the * * * Early Childhood Services Interagency Coordinating Council shall be as follows:

(a) * * * The State Superintendent of Public Education or his or her designee;

(b) * * * The State Health Officer of the Mississippi Department of Health or his or her designee;

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(c) *** The Executive Director of the Department of Human Services or his or her designee; and

(d) *** The Head Start Collaboration Director, Office of the Governor.

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(3) The council shall meet upon the call of the Governor on or before September 1, 2016, and shall organize for business by selecting a chairman and adopting bylaws.

(4) The Early Childhood Services Interagency Coordinating Council shall perform each of the following duties:

(a) Serve as the interagency coordinating council for the various agencies and state-funded programs serving preschool children and their families in the State of Mississippi;

(b) Align paperwork, monitoring visits, and evaluation of early education providers when state or federally funded programs overlap to eliminate duplication of effort. Alignment tasks may include:

   (i) Jointly conducting monitoring or evaluation visits;

   (ii) Developing and using common forms or other paperwork;

   (iii) Sharing compliance or other data across agencies to reduce the number of agencies seeking similar information;
(c) As a first step in an application review process, determine whether applicants and awardees of the Early Learning Collaborative Act meet the minimum statutory requirements to participate in the program prior to the full review by the Mississippi Department of Education. This first step of review shall examine:

(i) Whether each listed provider meets the definition of "provider" as specified in Section 37-21-51(c);

(ii) Whether the specified lead partner meets the definition of "lead partner" as described in Section 37-21-51;

(iii) Whether the proposed collaborative council meets the definition of "collaborative council" as specified in Section 37-21-51(b);

(iv) Whether the application maximizes current and new resources across provider types, including the distribution of proposed collaborative funds;

(v) Whether childcare applicants are licensed and in good standing;

(vi) Whether Head Start centers are recognized programs; and

(vii) Whether lead partners have the financial capacity to manage state funds appropriately;

(d) Develop standards for core competency development for teachers through professional continuing education, in
consultation with the schools of education in the university

system for articulation purposes.

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