

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Office of the Governor



July 8, 2020

TO THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

GOVERNOR'S PARTIAL VETO MESSAGE FOR HOUSE BILL 1700

I am returning House Bill 1700: "AN ACT MAKING AN APPROPRIATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING K-12 AND OTHER RELATED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING CERTAIN AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS, IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2021," partly approved and partly not approved pursuant to the authority of Article VI, Section 73 of the Mississippi Constitution and assigning the following reasons for partial veto of this bill.

The portion of the bill that will become law provides funding for the State Department of Education to continue its operations, including funding for its Vocational and Technical Education Division. However, the partial veto is necessary to ensure that adequate funds are available to pay 23,157 of Mississippi's best and brightest teachers the money owed to them under the School Recognition Program. In the absence of this partial veto, these teachers will be forced to take a pay cut.

House Bill Number 1700 makes appropriations for the funding K-12 and other educational activities and programs for Fiscal Year 2021. As introduced and passed in the House, the bill retained a critical provision that has been an established part of appropriations in previous years: "**SECTION 33. Of the funds appropriated in Section 1(a) twenty-four Million Nine Hundred Ninety-two Thousand Two Hundred One Dollars (\$24,992,201.00) shall be used for the School Recognition Program authorized by Section 37-19-10, Mississippi Code of 1972.**" However, that provision was inexplicably removed in conference, and the \$24,992,201.00 in funding for the School Recognition Program was transferred to another portion of the bill to provide additional funding to defray the expenses of the Mississippi Adequate Education Program.

The School Recognition Program established in Section 37-19-10 of the Mississippi Code has been a key tool in education reforms. Section 37-19-10(6) established the School Recognition Program Fund to be used by the State Department of Education to provide financial awards to schools that have worked hard and achieved accountability ratings of A or B, or have demonstrated improvement by one letter grade in accountability. The School Recognition Awards cannot be used for administrators. Instead, those funds must be used for nonrecurring salary supplements to the hardworking *teachers* and *staff* employed in those schools who have made those achievements possible.

Rewarding such hard work and achievement in K-12 education throughout Mississippi is a critical investment in the future of the state and the lives of students whose teachers make these achievements possible. Removing this essential provision from the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriation seeks to nullify the purpose and intent of the established in Section 37-19-10 and is essentially a defacto, backdoor repeal of that law.

Accordingly, in order to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to the Legislature to fully fund the School Recognition Program, I am vetoing the following sections and lines of House Bill 1700: Section 1(c),(d) and (e) at lines 21-33; Section 2(c) and (d) at lines 48-55; Section 3 at lines 56-63; Section 4 at lines 64-94; Section 13 at lines 380-383; Section 14 at lines 384-411; Section 15 at lines 412-436; Section 16 at lines 437-447; Section 17 at lines 448-452; Section 19 at lines 512-516; Section 22 at lines 535-545; Section 26 at lines 568-572; Section 27 at lines 573-578; and Section 29 at lines 591-594 pursuant to the authority of Article VI, Section 73 of the Mississippi Constitution, which provides: "The governor may veto parts of any appropriation bill, and approve parts of the same, and the portions shall be law."

Respectfully submitted,


TATE REEVES
GOVERNOR

JULY 8, 2020

11:00 P.M.