

By: Representative Hood

To: Tourism

HOUSE BILL NO. 656

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MISSISSIPPI GOSPEL MUSIC COMMISSION TO
 2 DEVELOP A PLAN TO PROMOTE AUTHENTIC MISSISSIPPI "GOSPEL" MUSIC AND
 3 "GOSPEL MUSIC CULTURE" FOR PURPOSES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT; TO
 4 PRESCRIBE THE FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE COMMISSION; TO EMPOWER
 5 THE COMMISSION TO ACCEPT AND EXPEND GRANT FUNDS; TO PROVIDE FOR
 6 INTERDEPARTMENTAL COOPERATION; TO AUTHORIZE AND DIRECT THE
 7 DIVISION OF TOURISM OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO
 8 ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE MISSISSIPPI "GOSPEL MUSIC TRAIL"
 9 INFRASTRUCTURE TO OFFER TO TOURISTS AND TARGETED GROUPS A
 10 STRUCTURED TOUR OF MISSISSIPPI GOSPEL MUSIC HISTORICAL SITES AND
 11 PERFORMANCE VENUES; TO AUTHORIZE THE DIVISION TO DESIGNATE AND
 12 ERECT APPROPRIATE "MISSISSIPPI GOSPEL MUSIC TRAIL" HISTORICAL
 13 MARKERS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

15 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby created the Mississippi
 16 Gospel Music Commission, hereinafter referred to as the
 17 "commission." The commission may accept and expend grants and
 18 private donations from any source, including federal, state,
 19 public and private entities, to assist it to carry out its
 20 functions.

21 (2) For purposes of this act, the term "gospel music" shall
 22 mean gospel, Christian, praise and worship and related music
 23 genres and the culture that created it.



24 (3) The powers, functions and duties of the commission shall
25 include, but not be limited to, the following:

26 (a) To study, deliberate and report to the Governor and
27 the Legislature on or before January 1, 2023, on the best method
28 to market and foster an appreciation of gospel, to include
29 tourism, academic study and gospel music archives, gospel music
30 historical preservation, gospel music cultural education and the
31 support of performing artists. Such marketing plan shall be
32 designed to attract tourists, conferences, music performances,
33 filmmakers and others for the purpose of economic development of
34 all geographic areas of the state through the promotion of gospel
35 music and the heritage and culture that produced such, and to
36 analyze the tourism potential of the gospel music for Mississippi.

37 (b) To make an inventory of gospel music "assets" that
38 make up gospel music and its culture that could be developed into
39 a program for domestic and international tourism, and
40 opportunities for investment.

41 (c) Coordination with the Division of Tourism of the
42 Mississippi Development Authority, the Department of Archives and
43 History, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the
44 Mississippi Educational Television Authority, the Board of
45 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, the Center for
46 the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi,
47 the Mississippi Arts Commission, and similar organizations to



48 share resources and information in order to ensure a comprehensive
49 approach to marketing the gospel music culture in Mississippi.

50 (d) To make recommendations regarding the establishment
51 of, and budgeting for, a permanent Mississippi office of gospel
52 music as an agency of state government with an executive director
53 and appropriate staff to carry out the marketing plan developed by
54 the commission. To the extent practical, any office shall be
55 located at an existing public or private location which is
56 appropriate to the gospel music culture in Mississippi, with
57 minimal cost to the state.

58 (e) Coordination of the gospel music marketing plan
59 with any existing state historic preservation programs, in order
60 to:

61 (i) Identify and preserve gospel music historic
62 properties;

63 (ii) Determine the eligibility of such properties
64 for listing on the National Register;

65 (iii) Prepare nominations of such sites for
66 inclusion on the National Register;

67 (iv) Maintenance of gospel music historical and
68 archaeological databases; and

69 (v) Evaluation of such sites for eligibility for
70 state and federal preservation incentives.

71 (f) To implement and continue the development and
72 creation of the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail as outlined in



73 Section 2 of this act, provide oversight of the trail and its
74 infrastructure, and explore funding opportunities to support
75 continued implementation.

76 (4) The commission shall be composed of the following
77 members:

78 (a) The Director of the Division of Tourism of the
79 Mississippi Development Authority;

80 (b) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
81 Department of Archives and History, or his or her designee;

82 (c) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Arts
83 Commission, or his or her designee;

84 (d) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
85 Educational Television Authority, or his or her designee;

86 (e) The Chairman of the Board of the Southern Arts and
87 Entertainment Center, or his or her designee;

88 (f) The Director of the Center for the Study of
89 Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi;

90 (g) The State Director of the USDA Rural Development
91 Agency;

92 (h) Two (2) members of the Mississippi Senate
93 designated by the Lieutenant Governor, who shall serve on a
94 nonvoting basis;

95 (i) Two (2) members of the Mississippi House of
96 Representatives designated by the Speaker of the House of
97 Representatives, who shall serve on a nonvoting basis;



98 (j) Two (2) members appointed by the Governor, who
99 shall have experience in cultural affairs or tourism development
100 in East Central Mississippi; and

101 (k) Four (4) members appointed by the Governor from the
102 state at large, who shall have demonstrated a commitment to the
103 understanding and promotion of gospel music.

104 (5) The Governor shall designate one (1) commission member
105 to serve as chairman for a term concurrent with that of the
106 Governor. The commission shall meet upon the call of the chairman
107 not later than August 1, 2022, and shall organize for business by
108 adopting internal organizational procedures necessary for
109 efficient operation of the commission, including officers, quorum
110 requirements and policies for any commission staff. Each member
111 of the commission shall designate necessary staff of his or her
112 respective agency, department, university or business entity, as
113 the case may be, to provide administrative support to assist the
114 commission in performing its duties and responsibilities. The
115 commission shall meet and conduct business at least quarterly.
116 Meetings of the commission shall be open to the public and
117 opportunity for public comment shall be made available.

118 (6) Members of the commission shall receive no compensation
119 for their services.

120 (7) The commission shall submit a report, including any
121 proposed legislation, to the Governor and to the Legislature
122 before the convening of the 2023 Regular Session. The report



123 shall include a comprehensive state plan for marketing gospel
124 music history as specifically provided above.

125 (8) All departments, boards, agencies, officers and
126 institutions of the state and all subdivisions thereof shall
127 cooperate with the commission in carrying out its purposes under
128 this act.

129 (9) Any funds or donations received by the commission shall
130 be deposited into a special fund which is created in the State
131 Treasury, and disbursement therefrom shall be made upon warrants
132 by the Department of Finance and Administration after receipt of
133 requisitions submitted by the appropriate person designated by the
134 commission. Monies in the special fund may be used by the
135 commission in carrying out its responsibilities under this act.
136 Unexpended amounts remaining in the special fund at the end of a
137 fiscal year shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and any
138 interest earned or investment earnings on amounts in the fund
139 shall be deposited to the credit of the special fund.

140 **SECTION 2.** The Division of Tourism of the Mississippi
141 Development Authority is authorized and directed to do the
142 following:

143 (a) To make an inventory of gospel music "assets" that
144 make up the gospel music culture that could be developed into a
145 program for domestic and international tourism, and opportunities
146 for investment.



147 (b) To establish a statewide Mississippi "Gospel Music
148 Trail" infrastructure to offer to tourists and target groups a
149 structured tour of Mississippi gospel music historical sites and
150 performance venues.

151 (c) To designate specific sites for the erection of
152 appropriate "Mississippi Gospel Music Trail" markers to offer to
153 tourists and targeted groups a structured tour of Mississippi
154 gospel music historical sites and performance venues. The
155 division shall be authorized to purchase appropriate Mississippi
156 Gospel Music Trail markers from any of its available funds. The
157 texts for the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail markers shall be
158 approved by the division. The Mississippi Department of
159 Transportation shall cooperate with the division by erecting and
160 maintaining the markers that have been approved by the division.

161 (d) To coordinate the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail
162 program with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History,
163 the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the Mississippi
164 Educational Television Authority, the Board of Trustees of State
165 Institutions of Higher Learning, the Center for the Study of
166 Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi, the Delta
167 Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University, the
168 Mississippi Arts Commission and similar organizations to share
169 resources and information in order to ensure a comprehensive
170 approach to marketing the gospel music and gospel music culture in
171 Mississippi.



172 (e) To coordinate the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail
173 marketing plan with any existing state historic preservation
174 program, in order to identify and preserve gospel music historic
175 properties, and determine the eligibility of such properties for
176 listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and prepare
177 nominations of such sites.

178 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
179 and after its passage.

