

By: Representatives McCarty, Stamps, Karriem To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 1340

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-51, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
2 TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH A FAMILY  
3 ENGAGEMENT KINDERGARTEN READINESS PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE  
4 HOMEBASED INSTRUCTION AND SERVICES TO APPROXIMATELY 1,000  
5 PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN SELECTED FOR ENROLLMENT IN THE PROGRAM AS  
6 AN ADDITIONAL COMPONENT OF THE "EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT  
7 OF 2013"; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

9 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-21-51, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
10 amended as follows:

11 37-21-51. (1) As used in this section:

12 (a) "Preschool or prekindergarten children" means any  
13 children who have not entered kindergarten but will have obtained  
14 four (4) years of age on or before September 1 of a school year.

15 (b) An "early learning collaborative" is a district or  
16 countywide council that writes and submits an application to  
17 participate in the voluntary prekindergarten program. An early  
18 learning collaborative is comprised, at a minimum, of a public  
19 school district and/or a local Head Start affiliate if in  
20 existence, private or parochial schools, or one or more licensed



21 child care centers. Agencies or other organizations that work  
22 with young children and their families may also participate in the  
23 collaborative to provide resources and coordination even if those  
24 agencies or organizations are not prekindergarten providers.

25 (c) A "prekindergarten provider" is a public, private  
26 or parochial school, licensed child care center or Head Start  
27 center that serves prekindergarten children and participates in  
28 the voluntary prekindergarten program.

29 (d) A "lead partner" is a public school district or  
30 other nonprofit entity with the instructional expertise and  
31 operational capacity to manage the early learning collaborative's  
32 prekindergarten program as described in the collaborative's  
33 approved application for funds. The lead partner serves as the  
34 fiscal agent for the collaborative and shall disburse awarded  
35 funds in accordance with the collaborative's approved application.  
36 The lead partner must facilitate a professional learning community  
37 for the teachers in the prekindergarten program and lead the  
38 collaborative. The lead partner ensures that the collaborative  
39 adopts and implements curriculum and assessments that align with  
40 the comprehensive early learning standards. The public school  
41 district shall be the lead partner if no other qualifying lead  
42 partner is selected.

43 (e) "Comprehensive early learning standards" are  
44 standards adopted by the State Board of Education that address the  
45 highest level of fundamental domains of early learning to include,



46 but not be limited to, physical well-being and motor development,  
47 social/emotional development, approaches toward learning, language  
48 development and cognition and general knowledge. The  
49 comprehensive early learning standards shall also include  
50 standards for emergent literacy skills, including oral  
51 communication, knowledge of print and letters, phonological and  
52 phonemic awareness, and vocabulary and comprehension development.

53 (f) An "evidence-based curriculum" is an  
54 age-appropriate curriculum that demonstrates a statistically  
55 significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant  
56 outcomes based on:

57 (i) Strong evidence from at least one (1)  
58 well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;

59 (ii) Moderate evidence from at least one (1)  
60 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or

61 (iii) Promising evidence from at least one (1)  
62 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with  
63 statistical controls for selection bias.

64 (2) To ensure that all children have access to quality early  
65 childhood education and development services, the Legislature  
66 finds and declares the following:

67 (a) Parents have the primary duty to educate their  
68 young preschool children;



69 (b) The State of Mississippi can assist and educate  
70 parents in their role as the primary caregivers and educators of  
71 young preschool children;

72 (c) There is a need to explore innovative approaches  
73 and strategies for aiding parents and families in the education  
74 and development of young preschool children; and

75 (d) There exists a patchwork of prekindergarten  
76 entities but no coordination of services and there needs to be a  
77 coordination of these services.

78 (3) (a) This subsection shall be known and may be cited as  
79 the "Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013."

80 (b) Effective with the 2013-2014 school year, the \* \* \*  
81 State Department of Education shall establish a voluntary  
82 prekindergarten program, which shall be a collaboration among the  
83 entities providing prekindergarten programs including Head Start,  
84 licensed child care facilities and licensed public, parochial and  
85 private school prekindergarten programs. This program shall be  
86 implemented no later than the 2014-2015 school year. Enrollment  
87 in the prekindergarten program shall be coordinated with the Head  
88 Start agencies in the local areas and shall not be permitted to  
89 cause a reduction in children served by the Head Start program.  
90 Under this program, eligible entities may submit an application  
91 for funds to (i) defray the cost of additional and/or more  
92 qualified teaching staff, appropriate educational materials and  
93 equipment and to improve the quality of educational experiences



94 offered to four-year-old children in early care and education  
95 programs, and/or to (ii) extend developmentally appropriate  
96 education services at such programs currently serving  
97 four-year-old children to include practices of high quality  
98 instruction, and to (iii) administer, implement, monitor and  
99 evaluate the programs, and to (iv) defray the cost of professional  
100 development and age-appropriate child assessment.

101 (c) Subject to the availability of funds appropriated  
102 therefor, the State Department of Education shall administer the  
103 implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the voluntary  
104 prekindergarten program, including awards and the application  
105 process.

106 (i) The department shall establish a rigorous and  
107 transparent application process for the awarding of funds. Lead  
108 partners shall submit the applications on behalf of their early  
109 learning collaborative.

110 (ii) The department will establish monitoring  
111 policies and procedures that, at a minimum, will include at least  
112 one (1) site visit a year.

113 (iii) The department will provide technical  
114 assistance to collaboratives and their providers to improve the  
115 quality of prekindergarten programs. Technical assistance may  
116 include classroom-embedded support for teachers and assistant  
117 teachers.



118 (iv) The department will evaluate the  
119 effectiveness of each early childhood collaborative and each  
120 prekindergarten provider. If the State Department of Education  
121 adopts a statewide kindergarten screening that assesses the  
122 readiness of each student for kindergarten, the State Department  
123 of Education shall adopt a minimum rate of readiness that each  
124 prekindergarten provider must meet in order to remain eligible for  
125 prekindergarten program funds. Each parent who enrolls his or her  
126 child in the prekindergarten program must submit the child for the  
127 statewide kindergarten screening, regardless of whether the child  
128 is admitted to kindergarten in a public school.

129 (d) Prekindergarten program funds shall be awarded to  
130 early childhood collaboratives whose proposed programs meet the  
131 program criteria. The criteria shall include:

132 (i) Voluntary enrollment of children;

133 (ii) Collaboration among prekindergarten providers  
134 and other early childhood programs through the establishment of an  
135 early learning collaborative;

136 (iii) Qualifications of master teachers, teachers  
137 and assistants, which must conform to guidelines in Section  
138 37-21-3;

139 (iv) At least fifteen (15) hours of annual  
140 professional development for program instructional staff,  
141 including professional development in early literacy, and  
142 individualized professional development plans for all teachers and



143 teaching assistants supplemented by classroom-embedded support on  
144 an as-needed basis;

145 (v) The use of state-adopted comprehensive early  
146 learning standards;

147 (vi) The use of a curriculum based on strong  
148 evidence as defined in subsection (1)(f)(i) of this section and  
149 aligned with the comprehensive early learning standards;

150 (vii) The use of a curriculum based on moderate  
151 evidence as defined in subsection (1)(f)(ii) of this section and  
152 aligned with the comprehensive early learning standards if no  
153 strong-evidence curriculum is available;

154 (viii) The use of a curriculum based on promising  
155 evidence as defined in subsection (1)(f)(iii) of this section and  
156 aligned with the comprehensive early learning standards if no  
157 strong-evidence curriculum or moderate-evidence curriculum is  
158 available;

159 (ix) The use of age-appropriate assessments  
160 aligned to the comprehensive early learning standards;

161 (x) Teacher/child ratios of one (1) adult for  
162 every ten (10) children with a maximum of twenty (20) children per  
163 classroom and a minimum of five (5) children per classroom;

164 (xi) The provision of at least one (1) meal  
165 meeting state and federal nutrition guidelines for young children;

166 (xii) Plans to screen and/or refer children for  
167 vision, hearing and other health issues;



- 168 (xiii) Family engagement opportunities;
- 169 (xiv) Plans to serve children with disabilities as  
170 indicated under IDEA;
- 171 (xv) The number of instructional hours to be  
172 provided, which shall equal no less than five hundred forty (540)  
173 instructional hours per school year for half-day programs and one  
174 thousand eighty (1,080) instructional hours per school year for  
175 full-day programs; and
- 176 (xvi) A budget detailing the use of funds for  
177 allowed expenses.

178 Participating child care centers shall: (a) meet state child  
179 care facility licensure requirements unless exempted under Section  
180 43-20-5, \* \* \* and (b) select and utilize a nationally recognized  
181 assessment tool, approved by the State Department of Education,  
182 designed to document classroom quality, which must be in place not  
183 later than July 1, 2016, as certified by the State Department of  
184 Education.

185 Within the prekindergarten program, a prekindergarten  
186 provider must comply with the antidiscrimination requirements  
187 applicable to public schools. A prekindergarten provider may not  
188 discriminate against a parent or child, including the refusal to  
189 admit a child for enrollment in the prekindergarten program, in  
190 violation of these antidiscrimination requirements. However, a  
191 prekindergarten provider may refuse to admit a child based on the  
192 provider's standard eligibility guidelines, provided that these





193 guidelines do not violate the antidiscrimination requirements.  
194 Consistent with the Legislature's recognition of the primacy of a  
195 parent's role in the education of a preschool-age child and the  
196 related recognition of the state in assisting and educating  
197 parents in that role, if the State Department of Education adopts  
198 a statewide kindergarten screening that assesses the readiness of  
199 each student for kindergarten, the State Department of Education  
200 shall recognize each child's unique pattern of development when  
201 adopting a minimum rate of readiness that prekindergarten  
202 providers must meet in order to remain eligible for  
203 prekindergarten program funds. Each parent who enrolls his or her  
204 child in the prekindergarten program may submit the child for the  
205 statewide kindergarten screening, regardless of whether the child  
206 is admitted to kindergarten in a public school.

207       The State Department of Education may add program criteria  
208 not inconsistent with these requirements and shall develop  
209 policies and procedures to implement and enforce these criteria.

210       (e) The State Department of Education shall ensure that  
211 early learning collaboratives provide each parent enrolling a  
212 child in the voluntary prekindergarten program with a profile of  
213 every prekindergarten provider participating in the  
214 collaborative's geographic catchment area. The State Department  
215 of Education shall prescribe the information to be included in  
216 each profile as well as the format of the profiles. At a minimum,  
217 the profiles must include the prekindergarten provider's services,



218 curriculum, instructor credentials and instructor-to-student  
219 ratio.

220 (f) A teacher, assistant teacher or other employee  
221 whose salary and fringe benefits are paid from state funds under  
222 this act shall only be classified as a state or local school  
223 district employee eligible for state health insurance benefits or  
224 membership in the Public Employees' Retirement System, if the  
225 person's employer is already an agency or instrumentality of the  
226 state, such as a school district, and the employee would be  
227 eligible for such benefits in the normal course of business.

228 (g) Funding shall be provided for this program  
229 beginning with the 2014 fiscal year subject to appropriation by  
230 the Legislature as provided in paragraph (h) of this subsection.  
231 The department shall make an annual report to the Legislature and  
232 the Governor regarding program operations and outcomes. Every  
233 three (3) years, with the first report due July 1, 2023, the  
234 department shall provide to the Legislature and the Governor a  
235 rigorous evaluation of program effectiveness using longitudinal  
236 data to measure short-term and long-term effects, including both  
237 achievement and nonachievement effects. After each three-year  
238 report, the PEER Committee shall review the three-year report and  
239 the intervening annual reports and submit an independent summary  
240 of its findings prior to the next legislative session.



241 (h) (i) The Legislature shall appropriate funds to  
242 implement the Early Education Collaborative Act of 2013 on a  
243 phased-in basis as follows:

244 1. The first phase shall be based on an  
245 annual state appropriation of not more than Eight Million Dollars  
246 (\$8,000,000.00) and shall serve approximately three thousand five  
247 hundred (3,500) children through five (5) to eight (8) early  
248 learning collaboratives and their prekindergarten providers;

249 2. The second phase shall be based on an  
250 annual state appropriation of not more than Sixteen Million  
251 Dollars (\$16,000,000.00) and shall serve approximately seven  
252 thousand (7,000) children through ten (10) to fifteen (15) early  
253 learning collaboratives and their prekindergarten providers;

254 3. The third phase shall be based on an  
255 annual state appropriation of not more than Thirty-three Million  
256 Nine Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$33,950,000.00) and shall  
257 serve approximately fifteen thousand (15,000) children through  
258 twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) early learning collaboratives and  
259 their prekindergarten providers.

260 (ii) Future phases shall be based on interest in  
261 the program and the effectiveness of the program as determined by  
262 the school readiness of participants. Each phase shall last for  
263 at least three (3) years but no more than five (5) years. The  
264 State Department of Education shall determine when to move to a  
265 new phase of the program, within the timeline provided herein.



266 (iii) Funding shall be provided to early learning  
267 collaboratives on the basis of Two Thousand One Hundred Fifty  
268 Dollars (\$2,150.00) per student in a full-day program per student  
269 in a full-day program and One Thousand Seventy-five Dollars  
270 (\$1,075.00) per student in a half-day program proposed in the  
271 collaborative's approved application. Once an early learning  
272 collaborative's plan is approved and funded, the collaborative  
273 and/or its prekindergarten providers shall receive funds on an  
274 ongoing basis unless the collaborative and/or its prekindergarten  
275 providers no longer meet the criteria to participate in the  
276 program.

277 (iv) Early learning collaboratives shall match  
278 state funds on a 1:1 basis. Local matching funds may include  
279 local tax dollars, federal dollars as allowed, parent tuition,  
280 philanthropic contributions, or in-kind donations of facilities,  
281 equipment and services required as part of the program such as  
282 food service or health screenings.

283 (v) The State Department of Education shall  
284 reserve no more than five percent (5%) of the appropriation in any  
285 year for administrative costs. Funds remaining after awards to  
286 early learning collaboratives and the department's administrative  
287 needs are met may be carried over in the following year. In the  
288 first year of implementation of the program, the department may  
289 delay the awarding of funds until the 2014-2015 school year should



290 time not be sufficient to establish the program's operation prior  
291 to the 2013-2014 school year.

292 (vi) In the initial phase of implementation, the  
293 State Department of Education shall award state funds under the  
294 Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 based on a community's  
295 capacity, commitment and need. To determine capacity, commitment  
296 and need, the State Department of Education shall require evidence  
297 of existing strong local collaborations of early education  
298 stakeholders. Such evidence shall include, but not be limited to,  
299 collaborations resulting from any of the following:

- 300 1. Participation in Excel By 5;
- 301 2. Participation in Supporting Partnerships  
302 to Assure Ready Kids (SPARK);
- 303 3. Participation in the Gilmore Early  
304 Learning Initiative (GELI); or
- 305 4. Participation in the Mississippi Building  
306 Blocks.

307 In determining community need, the department shall consider  
308 low academic achievement within the public school districts  
309 participating in an applicant early learning collaborative and the  
310 number and percentage of children without quality prekindergarten  
311 options.

312 (vii) All authority granted to the State  
313 Department of Education to establish program rules is subject to  
314 the public processes established in the provisions of the



315 Mississippi Administrative Procedures Law, including, but not  
316 limited to, filing notice of the proposed rules, public hearings  
317 and any economic impact statement with the Office of the Secretary  
318 of State before presenting such information to the State Board of  
319 Education for final approval.

320 (4) (a) This subsection shall be known and may be cited the  
321 "Family Engagement Kindergarten Readiness Pilot Program."

322 (b) Effective with the 2022-2023 school year, the State  
323 Department of Education shall establish a voluntary Family  
324 Engagement Kindergarten Readiness pilot program, to provide  
325 home-based instruction to a minimum of one thousand (1,000)  
326 preschool children in state. The pilot program shall:

327 (i) Be administered by a 501(c)(3) organization,  
328 which shall provide instruction, instructional services, equipment  
329 and supports to eligible preschool-age children selected to be in  
330 the program, which shall be delivered in the home of each such  
331 preschool-age child enrolled;

332 (ii) Include a parental engagement and involvement  
333 component, with support models provided in English, Spanish and  
334 other languages as needed;

335 (iii) Be designed to improve a child's transition  
336 into elementary education and contain content in reading,  
337 mathematics and science;



338                   (iv) Be aligned with the Mississippi Early  
339 Learning Standards for Classrooms Serving Four-Year-Old-Children  
340 and nationally recognized early learning standards;

341                   (v) Meet the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)  
342 recommendation of no more than one (1) hour of screen time per day  
343 for preschool-age children;

344                   (vi) Provide a computer or home internet service,  
345 or both, for low-income families as needed; and

346                   (vii) Include an evaluation component with  
347 measures for student academic growth over the course of the  
348 program.

349           **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
350 and after July 1, 2022.

