

By: Senator(s) Simmons (12th) (By Request),
Norwood (By Request)

To: Energy; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2535

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE HELPING MISSISSIPPIANS AFFORD BROADBAND
2 ACT; TO DEFINE TERMS AS USED IN THE ACT; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT
3 OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE
4 WIRELESS COMMUNICATION COMMISSION, TO CREATE A PROGRAM FOR THE
5 PURPOSE OF PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS
6 TO PURCHASE BROADBAND SERVICES; TO PROVIDE SUBSIDIES TO PROVIDERS
7 IN ORDER TO REDUCE BROADBAND COSTS TO HOUSEHOLDS; TO PROVIDE THAT
8 FUNDING FOR SUBSIDY COSTS SHALL COME FROM FUNDS AVAILABLE PURSUANT
9 TO THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

11 **SECTION 1.** This act may be cited as the "Helping
12 Mississippians Afford Broadband Act."

13 **SECTION 2.** As used in this section, the following words
14 shall have the meanings ascribed herein unless the context clearly
15 requires otherwise:

16 (a) "Commission" means Wireless Communication
17 Commission.

18 (b) "Department" means Department of Information
19 Technology Services.

20 (c) "Provider" means a broadband internet service
21 provider, including any telecommunications company, cable



22 television company, or wireless network provider that provides
23 broadband internet service.

24 (d) "Eligible Households" are defined as those
25 households that have already been approved to receive the federal
26 Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) or the federal Affordable
27 Connectivity Program (ACP) benefit.

28 **SECTION 3.** (1) The department in conjunction with the
29 commission shall create a program for the purpose of providing
30 financial assistance to eligible households to purchase broadband
31 services. An amount not to exceed Fifteen Dollars (\$15.00) per
32 month per household shall be paid directly to providers to reduce
33 households broadband costs. Either a provider or a household may
34 apply for the benefit.

35 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate, so
36 much as necessary, funds from the State Treasury that may be
37 payable from federal funds available for such purpose, to the
38 department for this purpose.

39 (3) The State Treasury shall have the authority to
40 distribute funds to the department to effectuate the purpose of
41 this act. The department shall allocate funds appropriated under
42 this act for subsidies. The department is granted the powers and
43 authorities necessary to implement this act. The funds authorized
44 in this section shall be payable by the department.

45 (4) Funding for subsidy costs shall come from funds
46 available pursuant to the American Rescue Plan Act, as determined



47 by the State Treasury. The State Treasury shall have the
48 authority to transfer funds to efficiently and effectively
49 accomplish the mission of the act.

50 (5) The money appropriated by this act shall be paid out of
51 any money in the State Treasury to the credit of the proper fund
52 or funds as set forth in this act, upon warrants issued by the
53 State Fiscal Officer, and the State Fiscal Officer shall issue the
54 warrants upon requisitions signed by the proper person, officer or
55 officers in the manner provided by law.

56 (6) The Department in conjunction with the commission shall
57 appoint an ombudsman to monitor this subsidy. The ombudsman will
58 advocate for those eligible to receive the subsidy and will work
59 to ensure this subsidy reaches the underserved communities that
60 need it most.

61 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
62 and after February 1, 2022.

