

By: Representative Hood

To: Tourism

HOUSE BILL NO. 775

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 REQUIRE THE DIVISION OF TOURISM
 7 OF THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE
 8 MISSISSIPPI "GOSPEL MUSIC TRAIL" INFRASTRUCTURE TO OFFER TO
 9 TOURISTS AND TARGETED GROUPS A STRUCTURED TOUR OF MISSISSIPPI
 10 GOSPEL MUSIC HISTORICAL SITES AND PERFORMANCE VENUES; TO AUTHORIZE
 11 THE DIVISION TO DESIGNATE AND ERECT APPROPRIATE MISSISSIPPI GOSPEL
 12 MUSIC TRAIL HISTORICAL MARKERS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

19 (2) For purposes of this act, the term "gospel music" means
 20 gospel, Christian, praise and worship and related music genres and
 21 the culture that created it.

22 (3) The powers, functions and duties of the commission
 23 include, but are not limited to, the following:



24 (a) To study, deliberate and report to the Governor and
25 the Legislature before January 1, 2024, on the best method to
26 market and foster an appreciation of gospel, to include tourism,
27 academic study and gospel music archives, gospel music historical
28 preservation, gospel music cultural education and the support of
29 performing artists. The marketing plan must be designed to
30 attract tourists, conferences, music performances, filmmakers and
31 others for the purpose of economic development of all geographic
32 areas of the state through the promotion of gospel music and the
33 heritage and culture that produced gospel music, and to analyze
34 the tourism potential of gospel music for Mississippi.

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

39 (c) To coordinate with the Division of Tourism of the
40 Mississippi Development Authority, the Department of Archives and
41 History, the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the
42 Mississippi Educational Television Authority, the Board of
43 Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning, the Center for
44 the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi,
45 the Mississippi Arts Commission and similar organizations the
46 sharing of resources and information in order to ensure a
47 comprehensive approach to marketing the gospel music culture in
48 Mississippi.



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

57 (e) To coordinate the gospel music marketing plan with
58 any existing state historic preservation programs in order to:

59 (i) Identify and preserve gospel music historic
60 properties;

61 (ii) Determine the eligibility of such properties
62 for listing on the National Register;

63 (iii) Prepare nominations of such sites for
64 inclusion on the National Register;

65 (iv) Maintain gospel music historical and
66 archaeological databases; and

67 (v) Evaluate such sites for eligibility for state
68 and federal preservation incentives.

69 (f) To implement and continue the development and
70 creation of the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail as outlined in
71 Section 2 of this act, provide oversight of the trail and its
72 infrastructure, and explore funding opportunities to support
73 continued implementation.



74 (4) The commission must be composed of the following
75 members:

76 (a) The Director of the Division of Tourism of the
77 Mississippi Development Authority;

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

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

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

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

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

88 (g) The State Director of the USDA Rural Development
89 Agency;

90 (h) Two (2) members of the Mississippi Senate
91 designated by the Lieutenant Governor, who must serve on a
92 nonvoting basis;

93 (i) Two (2) members of the Mississippi House of
94 Representatives designated by the Speaker of the House of
95 Representatives, who must serve on a nonvoting basis;

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



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

102 (5) The Governor shall designate one (1) commission member
103 to serve as chairman for a term concurrent with that of the
104 Governor. The commission shall meet upon the call of the chairman
105 not later than August 1, 2023, and shall organize for business by
106 adopting internal organizational procedures necessary for
107 efficient operation of the commission, including officers, quorum
108 requirements and policies for any commission staff. Each member
109 of the commission shall designate necessary staff of his or her
110 respective agency, department, university or business entity, as
111 the case may be, to provide administrative support to assist the
112 commission in performing its duties and responsibilities. The
113 commission shall meet and conduct business at least quarterly.
114 Meetings of the commission must be open to the public, and
115 opportunity for public comment must be made available.

116 (6) Members of the commission shall receive no compensation
117 for their services.

118 (7) The commission shall submit a report, including any
119 proposed legislation, to the Governor and to the Legislature
120 before the convening of the 2024 Regular Session. The report must
121 include a comprehensive state plan for marketing gospel music
122 history as specifically provided above.



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

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

138 **SECTION 2.** The Division of Tourism of the Mississippi
139 Development Authority shall do the following:

140 (a) Make an inventory of gospel music assets making up
141 the gospel music culture that could be developed into a program
142 for domestic and international tourism and opportunities for
143 investment.

144 (b) Establish a statewide Mississippi "Gospel Music
145 Trail" infrastructure to offer to tourists and targeted groups a
146 structured tour of Mississippi gospel music historical sites and
147 performance venues.



148 (c) Designate specific sites for the erection of
149 appropriate Mississippi Gospel Music Trail markers to offer to
150 tourists and targeted groups a structured tour of Mississippi
151 gospel music historical sites and performance venues. The
152 division may purchase appropriate Mississippi Gospel Music Trail
153 markers from any of its available funds. The text for the
154 Mississippi Gospel Music Trail markers must be approved by the
155 division. The Mississippi Department of Transportation shall
156 cooperate with the division by erecting and maintaining the
157 markers that have been approved by the division.

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

169 (e) Coordinate the Mississippi Gospel Music Trail
170 marketing plan with any existing state historic preservation
171 program in order to identify and preserve gospel music historic
172 properties and determine the eligibility of such properties for



173 listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and prepare
174 nominations of such sites.

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

