

By: Representatives Cockerham, Summers,  
Jackson, Anthony, Hulum, Sanders

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 1227

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE MENTAL AWARENESS PROGRAM FOR SCHOOLS; TO  
 2 AMEND SECTION 37-3-89, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE MENTAL  
 3 AWARENESS AND TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES IN EDUCATOR PREPARATION  
 4 PROGRAMS; TO DEFINE TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES; TO AMEND SECTION  
 5 37-9-79, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT PUBLIC SCHOOL  
 6 DISTRICTS AND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS SHALL HAVE AT LEAST ONE  
 7 SCHOOL COUNSELOR OR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDER PER 250  
 8 STUDENTS; TO AUTHORIZE UNDERFUNDED AND UNDERSTAFFED SCHOOLS TO  
 9 EMPLOY ONE SCHOOL COUNSELOR TO SERVICE ALL THE SCHOOLS IN THE  
 10 EMPLOYING SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF TIME  
 11 AND DUTIES WITHIN SUCH DISTRICTS; TO REQUIRE SCHOOL COUNSELORS OR  
 12 SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDERS TO CREATE A  
 13 TRAUMA-INFORMED TEAM FOR EACH SCHOOL; TO REQUIRE SCHOOL DISTRICTS  
 14 AND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS TO REPORT THE NUMBER AND PLACEMENT OF  
 15 SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN THE DISTRICT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION;  
 16 TO AUTHORIZE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ENTER INTO A MEMORANDUM OF  
 17 AGREEMENT WITH A NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED SOCIAL WORK CONSORTIUM AND  
 18 CERTAIN STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING TO PLACE MASTER'S  
 19 LEVEL GRADUATE STUDENTS INTO SCHOOLS AS SCHOOL COUNSELORS UNDER A  
 20 SUPERVISED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM; TO CREATE NEW SECTION 37-9-80,  
 21 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH REQUIRES THE DEPARTMENT OF  
 22 EDUCATION, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH,  
 23 TO CREATE A TOOLKIT TO ASSIST SCHOOLS IN IMPLEMENTING  
 24 TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

26 **SECTION 1.** The provisions of this act shall be known and may  
 27 be cited as the "Mental Awareness Program for School Act."

28 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-3-89, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
 29 amended as follows:



30           37-3-89. (1) The State Board of Education, acting through  
31 the Commission on Teacher and Administrator Education,  
32 Certification and Licensure and Development, shall require each  
33 educator preparation program in the state, as a condition for  
34 approval, to include a course or courses on school discipline or  
35 classroom management, including mental disturbance awareness and  
36 trauma-informed approaches as defined in subsection (2) of this  
37 section, as a required part of the teacher education program. All  
38 school discipline or classroom management courses offered by a  
39 teacher education program shall be approved by the Educator  
40 License Commission.

41           (2) "Mental disturbance awareness and trauma-informed  
42 approaches" means incorporating principles of mental disturbance  
43 awareness, trauma awareness and trauma-informed practices, as  
44 recommended by the federal Department of Health and Human  
45 Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
46 Administration, in a school in order to foster a safe learning  
47 environment for all students and staff, and to ensure that each  
48 student is well-known by at least one (1) adult in the school  
49 setting.

50           **SECTION 3.** Section 37-9-79, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
51 amended as follows:

52           37-9-79. (1) Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the  
53 assignment of K-12 Professional School Counselors to the



54 particular schools within the district shall be at the discretion  
55 of the local school board with the following restrictions:

56 (a) As funds and qualified personnel become available,  
57 every public school district and public charter school shall  
58 employ at least one (1) school counselor in each school;

59 (b) As funds and qualified personnel become available,  
60 it shall be the goal that each public school district and public  
61 charter school shall provide at least one (1) school counselor for  
62 every two hundred fifty (250) students, including, but not limited  
63 to, the school counselor required in paragraph (a) of this  
64 subsection;

65 (c) If funds or qualified personnel are not available  
66 each public school district and public charter school shall employ  
67 at least one (1) school counselor who shall serve the entire  
68 school district, and who shall proportionately allocate his or her  
69 service, on a rotational basis, to each school in the school  
70 district or each public charter school under the jurisdiction of a  
71 single charter governing board. Additionally, in the event that a  
72 mental disturbance or trauma-inducing incident occurs at any  
73 school in the school district or charter district on a date the  
74 school counselor is not scheduled in assigned service rotation at  
75 that school, the school counselor shall be temporarily assigned to  
76 the school where the incident occurred, until such time that the  
77 school counselor, building principal and district superintendent



78 or charter administrator reasonably conclude that the trauma has  
79 been mitigated.

80 ( \* \* \*d) Except as otherwise provided under subsection  
81 (6) of this section, no individual shall be employed as a  
82 professional school counselor without a minimum of a master's  
83 degree in \* \* \* counseling, or in an emergency situation, an  
84 appropriate certification as determined by the Commission on  
85 Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure  
86 and Development; and

87 ( \* \* \*e) Professional school counselors shall provide  
88 the following comprehensive counseling services:

89 (i) Academic, \* \* \* social, emotional and  
90 college-and-career readiness counseling;

91 (ii) Use multiple student data sources to help  
92 students make informed academic and career choices;

93 (iii) Career and educational counseling;

94 (iv) Individual and group counseling  
95 (large/small);

96 (v) Crisis intervention and preventive counseling;

97 (vi) Referrals to community agencies;

98 (vii) Educational consultations and collaboration  
99 with teachers, administrators, parents and community leaders;

100 (viii) Educational and career placement services;

101 (ix) Follow-up counseling services;

102 (x) Conflict resolution; and



103 (xi) Professional school counselors must spend a  
104 minimum of eighty percent (80%) of their \* \* \* time to the  
105 delivery of services to students \* \* \*. Delivery of services is  
106 the direct service provided to students, parents, school staff and  
107 the community which are interaction between professional school  
108 counselors and students. These direct services may include the  
109 delivery of the following:

110 1. School counseling core curriculum: This  
111 curriculum is designed to help students attain the desired  
112 competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge,  
113 attitudes and skills appropriate for their developmental level.  
114 The school counseling core curriculum is delivered throughout the  
115 school's overall curriculum and may be presented by professional  
116 school counselors in collaboration with other professional  
117 educators and other resources. Collaborative efforts may be  
118 implemented to enhance the services provided.

119 2. Individual student planning: Professional  
120 school counselors coordinate ongoing systemic activities or  
121 individual/group sessions designed to assist students in  
122 establishing personal/social goals and developing future career  
123 plans.

124 3. Responsive services: Responsive services  
125 are designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns in  
126 regard to social/personal issues. Responsive services may include  
127 counseling in individual, small-group settings, \* \* \* crisis



128 responses, mentally disturbance awareness or trauma-informed  
129 approaches as defined in Section 37-3-89(2).

130 4. Indirect Student Services: Indirect  
131 services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the  
132 school counselors' interactions with others including referrals  
133 for additional assistance, consultation and collaboration with  
134 parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations.

135 (2) Professional school counselors shall abide by \* \* \* a  
136 relevant national counseling code of ethics.

137 (3) A professional school counselor or administrator shall  
138 facilitate at each school the creation of a trauma-informed team  
139 to identify students whose learning, behavior and relationships  
140 have been impacted by trauma. The trauma-informed team may  
141 consist of school administrators, school counselors, teachers,  
142 mental health services providers, family resource and youth  
143 service coordinators, school nurses and any other school or  
144 district personnel.

145 (4) Each school counselor providing services pursuant to  
146 this section, in collaboration with the trauma-informed team  
147 members described in this section, shall provide at least one (1)  
148 hour of in-person or virtual annual training, guidance and  
149 assistance to administrators, teachers and staff on:

150 (a) Recognizing symptoms of mentally induced  
151 disturbance or trauma in students; and



152           (b) Utilizing responses, interventions and strategies  
153 to support the learning needs of those students.

154           (5) (a) School districts may employ, contract or otherwise  
155 work collaboratively with mental health service providers,  
156 including community mental health centers, other organizations  
157 providing relevant training for educators and school personnel, or  
158 other school districts to assist with the development and  
159 implementation of mental awareness and trauma-informed approaches  
160 and a trauma-informed team.

161           (b) School districts and public charter schools may  
162 enter in a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Consortium for  
163 Career Development in Social Work Education, or other similar  
164 nationally recognized consortium career services professionals  
165 representing and/or serving social work education, which partner  
166 with colleges and universities serving social work students in the  
167 State of Mississippi, including, but not limited to, Delta State  
168 University, Jackson State University, Mississippi State University  
169 and the University of Mississippi. Through the use of the MOA the  
170 consortium shall establish a program in collaboration with the  
171 Social Work Departments of the participating colleges and  
172 universities to:

173           (i) Provide students pursuing master's degrees in  
174 social work, counseling or psychology with internship placement  
175 opportunities in school districts or charter schools to assist in  
176 providing counseling services to schools in need;



177                   (ii) Provide students pursuing master's degrees in  
178 social work, counseling or psychology with practical workplace  
179 experience; and

180                   (iii) Pair such students with local  
181 consortium-member mentees who will offer professional guidance and  
182 constructive observation and feedback.

183           (6) Local school districts and each public charter school  
184 shall report the number and placement of school counselors in the  
185 district to the State Department of Education no later than  
186 November 1, 2023, and each subsequent year thereafter. The report  
187 shall include the source of funding for each position, as well as  
188 a summary of the job duties of each counselor and the approximate  
189 percent of time devoted to duties over the course of the year.

190           ( \* \* \*7) The State Department of Education may adopt  
191 regulations regarding the activities of the professional school  
192 counselor as are not inconsistent with this section.

193           **SECTION 4.** The following shall be codified as Section  
194 37-9-80, Mississippi Code of 1972:

195           37-9-80. (1) On or before July 1, 2023, the State  
196 Department of Education, in collaboration with the State  
197 Department of Mental Health, shall make available a toolkit to  
198 assist school districts and public charter schools in  
199 implementing trauma-informed teams as described in Section  
200 37-9-79(3). The toolkit shall include a template for local boards  
201 of education and public charter schools to develop a plan to





202 incorporate mental disturbance awareness and trauma-informed  
203 approaches in schools.

204 (2) On or before July 1, 2025, each local board of education  
205 and public charter school shall develop a plan for implementing  
206 trauma-informed teams and mental disturbance awareness and  
207 trauma-informed approaches in its schools. These plans shall be  
208 submitted to the State Department of Education and the State  
209 Department of Mental Health, which may collaborate to provide  
210 feedback to school districts on the plans. Plans shall include,  
211 but not be limited to, strategies for:

212 (a) Enhancing mental disturbance and trauma awareness  
213 throughout the school community and provide services designed to  
214 foster a safe school environment for students;

215 (b) Developing trauma-informed discipline policies and  
216 practices, which may include consultation with the school  
217 counselor or school-based mental health services provider when a  
218 student is recommended for suspension for ten (10) or more days,  
219 expulsion or attendance at an alternative school; and

220 (c) Collaborating with appropriate and relevant school,  
221 public safety, and community organizations to create procedures  
222 for notification of trauma-exposed students.

223 **SECTION 5.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
224 and after its passage.

