

By: Senator(s) Boyd

To: Public Health and  
Welfare; Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2167

1 AN ACT TO ENACT THE MISSISSIPPI EARLY INTERVENTION PILOT  
2 PROJECT ACT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI  
3 EARLY INTERVENTION PILOT PROJECT WITHIN THE T.K. MARTIN CENTER AT  
4 MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY, SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF  
5 FUNDING, FOR A PERIOD OF ONE YEAR BEGINNING ON JULY 1, 2023; TO  
6 PROVIDE FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE PILOT PROJECT, INCLUDING THAT IT  
7 TAKE REFERRALS FROM PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS WHO ARE LOCATED WITHIN  
8 THE DESIGNATED PILOT PROJECT AREA BASED ON AN IDENTIFIED CONCERN  
9 ON EITHER AN EVIDENCE-BASED DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENER OR A CAREGIVER  
10 CONCERN AND TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING EARLY INTERVENTION  
11 SERVICES AS WELL AS ASSISTING FAMILIES WHO WILL TRANSITION FROM  
12 IDEA PART C SERVICES TO IDEA PART B SERVICES DURING THE PILOT  
13 PROJECT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE  
14 DIRECTOR OF THE T.K. MARTIN CENTER, INCLUDING REQUIRING THE  
15 DIRECTOR TO SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE AT THE CONCLUSION  
16 OF THE PROJECT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EARLY  
17 INTERVENTION TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE IDEA PART C EARLY  
18 INTERVENTION SYSTEM IN MISSISSIPPI AND MISSISSIPPI'S LAWS  
19 REGARDING EARLY INTERVENTION; TO PROVIDE FOR THE GOALS AND  
20 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TASK FORCE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP  
21 OF THE TASK FORCE; TO REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP AND REPORT  
22 ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO THE  
23 LEGISLATURE ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2023; AND FOR RELATED  
24 PURPOSES.

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

26 **SECTION 1.** (1) This act shall be known and may be cited as  
27 the "Mississippi Early Intervention Pilot Project Act."

28 (2) As used in this act, the following terms shall have the  
29 meanings ascribed herein:



30 (a) "Designated pilot project area" means an area that  
31 serves eligible children within the following counties: Choctaw,  
32 Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha and Winston.

33 (b) "Early intervention services" shall have the same  
34 meaning as defined in Section 41-87-5.

35 (c) "Eligible infants and toddlers" or "eligible  
36 children" shall have the same meaning as defined in Section  
37 41-87-5.

38 (d) "IDEA Part B" means Part B of the Individuals with  
39 Disabilities Education Act pursuant to 20 USC 1411; 34 CFR 300.

40 (e) "IDEA Part C" means Part C of the Individuals with  
41 Disabilities Education Act pursuant to 20 USC 1431; 34 CFR 303.

42 (f) "IFSP" means Individual Family Service Plan.

43 (g) "Mississippi Early Intervention Pilot Project" or  
44 "Pilot Project" means the Early Intervention Pilot Project created  
45 in this act and administered by the T.K. Martin Center for  
46 Technology and Disability ("T.K. Martin Center") at Mississippi  
47 State University.

48 (h) "Primary service providers" means a family's  
49 primary contact for early intervention services who sees the  
50 family most often, who collaborates with all service providers on  
51 the IFSP team and who helps the family address the child's  
52 development from a holistic perspective.

53 (i) "University-based hub model" means a form of  
54 service delivery in which early intervention services are provided



55 by state-employed personnel who provide service coordination,  
56 developmental assessments, developmental intervention, child find,  
57 and public awareness activities through Single Point of Entry  
58 District Offices (SPOE) located within public university systems.

59 (3) There is established within the T.K. Martin Center, the  
60 Mississippi Early Intervention Pilot Project, subject to the  
61 availability of funding for such purposes. The Pilot Project will  
62 deploy a fully staffed and salaried early intervention team in the  
63 designated pilot project area using a university-based hub model  
64 that is not dependent on contract providers. The purpose of the  
65 Pilot Project is to determine if this approach to treatment is as  
66 efficient and as effective, or more effective, than the current  
67 First Steps Early Intervention Program operated at the Mississippi  
68 State Department of Health.

69 (4) The Pilot Project shall:

70 (a) Be administered by the T.K. Martin Center at  
71 Mississippi State University;

72 (b) Be operated for a period of one (1) year beginning  
73 on July 1, 2023, and continuing through July 1, 2024;

74 (c) Take referrals from primary care providers who are  
75 located within the designated pilot project area based on an  
76 identified concern on either an evidence-based developmental  
77 screener or a caregiver concern;

78 (d) Provide timely and evidence-based early  
79 intervention services to eligible children;



80 (e) Collect and supply data on the efficacy of  
81 deploying a fully staffed and salaried intervention team using a  
82 university-based hub model not dependent on contract providers;

83 (f) Utilize the University of Mississippi Medical  
84 Center's Child Health Developmental Promotion (CHDP) fellows who  
85 shall provide in-kind services as additional service providers  
86 needed to enhance the early intervention services at the T.K.  
87 Martin Center;

88 (g) Provide early intervention services to children who  
89 are in the custody of Mississippi Child Protection Services;

90 (h) Partner with the Social Science Research Center at  
91 Mississippi State University who will provide project evaluation  
92 services;

93 (i) Be comprised of an early intervention team as  
94 required by IDEA Part C for service provisions and shall be  
95 comprised of a medical provider, occupational therapist, physical  
96 therapist, speech-language pathologist, early  
97 interventionist/developmental specialist, two (2) psychologists  
98 and a social worker, the majority of which are employees at the  
99 T.K. Martin Center or are CHDP fellows; and

100 (j) Be responsible for providing early intervention  
101 services as well as assisting families who will transition from  
102 IDEA Part C services to IDEA Part B services during the Pilot  
103 Project.

104 (5) The Executive Director of the T.K. Martin Center shall:



105 (a) Submit a report to the Legislature on or before  
106 January 1, 2024, and at the conclusion of the Pilot Project; and

107 (b) Submit periodic reports to the "Early Intervention  
108 Task Force to Study the IDEA Part C Early Intervention System in  
109 Mississippi and Mississippi's Laws Regarding Early Intervention."

110 (6) The reports shall include, but are not limited to, the  
111 following information:

112 (a) Total spent on Pilot Project funding;

113 (b) The amount of administrative costs to operate the  
114 Pilot Project;

115 (c) The demographics of designated pilot project areas;

116 (d) The number of children (by county and age) deemed  
117 eligible for services using current early intervention eligibility  
118 criteria;

119 (e) The number of children (by county and age) deemed  
120 eligible for services using expanded early intervention  
121 eligibility criteria which includes children at-risk of developing  
122 a delay;

123 (f) The number of children (by county and age) served  
124 by the Pilot Project;

125 (g) The number of children (by county and age) referred  
126 to the Pilot Project;

127 (h) The number of caregivers (by county) preferring  
128 service delivery in natural environments;



129 (i) The number of children (by county and age) served  
130 in natural environments;

131 (j) The number of caregivers (by county) opting for  
132 program intake by telehealth services;

133 (k) The number of children (by county and age)  
134 receiving timely services as required by IDEA Part C;

135 (l) The number of children (by county and age)  
136 exhibiting improvement in outcomes such as positive social  
137 emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and  
138 use of appropriate behaviors;

139 (m) The number of families (by county) reporting that  
140 early intervention services have helped them in the following  
141 ways: knowing their rights, effectively communicating their  
142 children's needs and helping their children develop and learn;

143 (n) The number of children (by county and age)  
144 receiving timely referrals to an (IFSP) as required by IDEA Part  
145 C;

146 (o) The number of children (by county and age) with  
147 disabilities exiting IDEA Part C with a timely transition  
148 notification, conferencing and planning to enter IDEA Part B; and

149 (p) The data collected on program eligibility and  
150 family preference for, and feasibility of, services delivered in  
151 natural environments.

152 **SECTION 2.** (1) There is hereby established the "Early  
153 Intervention Task Force to Study the IDEA Part C Early



154 Intervention System in Mississippi and Mississippi's Laws  
155 Regarding Early Intervention." The goal of the Task Force shall  
156 be to develop a recommendation to the Legislature on reforming the  
157 current early intervention system and laws in Mississippi, with a  
158 goal of increasing access to services for children from birth to  
159 age three (3) through a robust First Steps Early Intervention  
160 Program. The Task Force may propose legislation and rule changes  
161 based upon its recommendation.

162 (2) The members of the Task Force shall be as follows:

163 (a) The Chairmen of the Public Health Committees of the  
164 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,  
165 or his or her designee from their respective committee membership;

166 (b) The Chairmen of the Appropriations Committees of  
167 the Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of  
168 Representatives, or his or her designee from their respective  
169 committee membership;

170 (c) One (1) member of the Mississippi State Senate, to  
171 be named by the Lieutenant Governor; and one (1) member of the  
172 Mississippi House of Representatives, to be named by the Speaker  
173 of the House of Representatives, who are interested in early  
174 intervention issues;

175 (d) The State Health Officer of the Mississippi  
176 Department of Health or a designated deputy;



177 (e) One (1) designee that is a direct service provider  
178 in the First Steps Early Intervention Program, to be named by the  
179 State Health Officer;

180 (f) One (1) faculty member from the Social Science  
181 Research Center (SSRC) at Mississippi State University, to be  
182 named by the director of the SSRC;

183 (g) One (1) developmental-behavioral pediatrician with  
184 expertise in early childhood systems building, to be named by the  
185 Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical Center;

186 (h) One (1) general pediatrician, to be named by the  
187 Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics;

188 (i) One (1) clinical psychologist with expertise in  
189 social-emotional health of infants and toddlers, to be named by  
190 the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical  
191 Center;

192 (j) One (1) school psychologist, to be named by the  
193 Mississippi Association of Psychologists in the Schools;

194 (k) One (1) early interventionist/development  
195 therapist, to be named by the State Health Officer;

196 (l) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Early  
197 Learning Alliance;

198 (m) One (1) family advocacy representative to be  
199 appointed by the Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition  
200 for Citizens with Disabilities.





201 (n) One (1) parent representative with a current or  
202 experience with early intervention to be appointed by the  
203 Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with  
204 Disabilities.

205 (o) A faculty member from each of the universities  
206 within the Institutions of Higher Learning with an early childhood  
207 development program or early intervention program, to be named by  
208 the president of each university shall serve as advisory members  
209 to the task force; and

210 (p) Any other advisory members as determined necessary  
211 by the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and  
212 Expenditure Review.

213 (3) The Task Force shall meet within forty-five (45) days of  
214 the effective date of this act and shall evaluate the current  
215 early intervention laws in Mississippi. Specifically, the Task  
216 Force shall:

217 (a) Evaluate early intervention infrastructure in  
218 Mississippi and in states with better performance outcomes as  
219 compared to Mississippi, study the employment structures of early  
220 intervention systems and evaluate eligibility requirements to  
221 support serving more children within the early intervention  
222 system;

223 (b) Review billing and reimbursement processes and  
224 rates for early intervention services in Mississippi and in other  
225 states, to ensure a timely receipt of payment to providers;



226 (c) Explore options for an ideal location where early  
227 intervention services should be housed to reduce barriers to  
228 implementation;

229 (d) Study early intervention service delivery models  
230 used in surrounding states, including a university-based hub model  
231 and evaluate how this model may impact the training of students  
232 and future professionals;

233 (e) Assess the efficiency of telemedicine for initial  
234 evaluations and therapeutic services deemed clinically  
235 appropriate;

236 (f) Explore the benefits of including additional  
237 service providers within the early intervention service delivery  
238 system;

239 (g) Review the Comprehensive Systems of Personnel  
240 Development (CSPD) and the quantity, quality and effectiveness of  
241 the early intervention workforce; explore the feasibility of  
242 funding a CSPD Coordinator within a state agency to assist in  
243 ensuring all early intervention providers meet competencies for  
244 serving young children;

245 (h) Evaluate the Early Intervention Pilot Project, as  
246 created in Section 2 of this act, review program data and provide  
247 recommendations;

248 (i) Explore the feasibility of developing an Office of  
249 Early Childhood and provide recommendations on this approach; and



250 (j) Review any other matters related to the above  
251 issues or related to early intervention services.

252 (4) The Task Force may request the assistance of the  
253 Mississippi Department of Health, the Social Sciences Research  
254 Center at Mississippi State University, the Mississippi Early  
255 Learning Alliance or any other related entity or organization with  
256 expertise in early intervention services.

257 (5) The members of the Task Force shall elect a Chair from  
258 among the members. The Task Force shall develop and report its  
259 findings and recommendations for proposed legislation to the  
260 Legislature and proposed rule changes to the Mississippi  
261 Department of Health on or before December 1, 2023. A quorum of  
262 the membership shall be required to approve any final report and  
263 recommendation. Members of the Task Force shall be reimbursed for  
264 necessary travel expense in the same manner as public employees  
265 are reimbursed for official duties from any available funds and  
266 members of the Legislature shall be reimbursed in the same manner  
267 as for attending out-of-session committee meetings.

268 (6) The Joint Legislative Committee on Performance  
269 Evaluation and Expenditure Review shall provide necessary clerical  
270 support for the meetings of the Task Force and the preparation of  
271 the report. Proposed legislation shall be prepared by the  
272 Legislative Services Offices of the Senate and House as requested.

273 (7) The Task Force shall be dissolved upon presentation of  
274 its report.



275           **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
276 and after July 1, 2023.

