

By: Senator(s) Sojourner

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2368

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-16-7, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
 2 REQUIRE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES TO PASS AT LEAST 60% OF THE CIVICS
 3 PORTION OF THE NATURALIZATION TEST USED BY THE IMMIGRATION
 4 SERVICES; TO AMEND SECTION 37-35-9, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
 5 REQUIRE HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA APPLICANTS TO PASS AT
 6 LEAST 60% OF THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE NATURALIZATION TEST USED BY
 7 THE IMMIGRATION SERVICES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

9 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-16-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
 10 amended as follows:

11 37-16-7. (1) Each district school board shall establish
 12 standards for graduation from its schools which shall include as a
 13 minimum:

14 (a) Mastery of minimum academic skills as measured by
 15 assessments developed and administered by the State Board of
 16 Education.

17 (b) Completion of a minimum number of academic credits,
 18 and all other applicable requirements prescribed by the district
 19 school board.



20 (c) (i) Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year,
21 fulfillment of a requirement to correctly answer at least sixty
22 (60) of the one hundred (100) questions listed on a test that is
23 identical to the civics portion of the Naturalization Test used by
24 the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

25 (ii) The local school board may determine the
26 method and manner in which to administer a test that is identical
27 to the civics portion of the Naturalization Test used by the
28 United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

29 (iii) A student who does not obtain a passing
30 score on the test that is identical to the civics portion of the
31 Naturalization Test may retake the test until the student obtains
32 a passing score.

33 (iv) A student who has passed a similar test
34 within the previous three (3) years shall not be required to take
35 the test under this paragraph (c).

36 (v) Provisions of this paragraph (c) shall be
37 subject to the requirements and accommodations of a student's
38 Individualized Education Program.

39 (* * *d) By school, information on high school
40 graduation rates. High schools with graduation rates lower than
41 eighty percent (80%) must submit a detailed plan to the
42 Mississippi Department of Education to restructure the high school
43 experience to improve graduation rates.



44 (2) A student who meets all requirements prescribed in
45 subsection (1) of this section shall be awarded a standard diploma
46 in a form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

47 (3) The State Board of Education may establish student
48 proficiency standards for promotion to grade levels leading to
49 graduation.

50 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-35-9, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
51 amended as follows:

52 37-35-9. (1) The Mississippi Community College Board is
53 authorized to develop and establish general educational
54 development preparatory classes in secondary schools and
55 community/junior colleges and to provide financial assistance from
56 the state for the specific purpose of preparing persons sixteen
57 (16) years of age and older, not enrolled in school or required to
58 be enrolled in school by the Compulsory School Attendance Law
59 (Section 37-13-91) to successfully write the general educational
60 development test and earn a certificate of equivalency which is
61 equivalent to the high school diploma.

62 (2) (a) The Mississippi Community College Board is
63 authorized to administer the High School Equivalency Diploma
64 Testing Program in accordance with the policies and guidelines of
65 the High School Equivalency Diploma Testing Service of the
66 American Council on Education. Such administration shall include
67 the approval of rules and regulations for the administration,
68 scoring, issuing of transcripts and awarding of diplomas for the



69 High School Equivalency Diploma Testing Program. The Mississippi
70 Community College Board is hereby authorized to assess a fee in an
71 amount not to exceed Five Dollars (\$5.00) for issuing an
72 additional copy of a High School Equivalency Diploma transcript.

73 (b) (i) Beginning January 1, 2024, the Mississippi
74 Community College Board shall require that a person must correctly
75 answer at least sixty (60) of the one hundred (100) questions
76 listed on a test that is identical to the civics portion of the
77 Naturalization Test used by the United States Citizenship and
78 Immigration Services in order to obtain a High School Equivalency
79 Diploma.

80 (ii) The Mississippi Community College Board may
81 determine the method and manner in which to administer a test that
82 is identical to the civics portion of the Naturalization Test used
83 by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

84 (iii) A person who does not obtain a passing score
85 on the test that is identical to the civics portion of the
86 Naturalization Test may retake the test until the person obtains a
87 passing score.

88 (iv) A person who has passed a similar test within
89 the previous three (3) years shall not be required to take the
90 test under this paragraph (b).

91 (3) This program shall be administered by the Mississippi
92 Community College Board through the secondary schools and



93 community/junior colleges as the local needs indicate and are
94 practical.

95 (4) Full and general supervision over the program by the
96 Mississippi Community College Board shall * * * ensure that
97 duplication of effort by secondary schools and community/junior
98 colleges will be eliminated; however, nothing in this section
99 shall be construed to prohibit a school district from implementing
100 a program of High School Equivalency Diploma preparatory
101 instruction.

102 (5) Adult students for general educational development
103 preparatory classes may be accepted by schools and junior colleges
104 from any area of the state provided students are bona fide
105 residents of Mississippi.

106 (6) Instructors, counselors and supervisors utilized in the
107 teaching of general educational development preparatory classes
108 shall be licensed in the appropriate area as required by the
109 Mississippi Community College Board.

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

