

By: Representative Scott

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 266

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE "MISSISSIPPI HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT
 2 PREVENTION ACT OF 2024"; TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF
 3 EDUCATION TO WORK WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT HAVE THE LOWEST HIGH
 4 SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT TO DEVELOP
 5 METHODS OF TARGETED INTERVENTION FOR LOW PERFORMING SCHOOL
 6 DISTRICTS; TO PROVIDE THAT CHILDREN OF A CERTAIN AGE MAY NOT
 7 WITHDRAW FROM SCHOOL UNLESS CERTAIN CONDITIONS ARE MET; AND FOR
 8 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

10 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the
 11 "Mississippi High School Dropout Prevention Act of 2024."

12 **SECTION 2.** (1) The State Department of Education shall work
 13 with the school districts that have the lowest high school
 14 graduation rates. The department shall incorporate into its
 15 progressive support and intervention specific dropout prevention
 16 strategies, target resources, and gather data that will include
 17 graduation rates and educational outcomes in all public schools.

18 (2) The department shall develop specific methods of
 19 targeted intervention or identify appropriate existing methods for
 20 low performing school districts. These intervention methods may
 21 include the following:



22 (a) Early intervention for students who fail Algebra I
23 or any Grade 9 math class and have insufficient credits to be
24 promoted;

25 (b) Alternative programs designed to reengage dropouts,
26 including dual enrollment courses at the community college level;

27 (c) Increased availability of advanced placement
28 courses;

29 (d) Offering full course fee waivers for students
30 eligible for free and reduced lunches, when enrolled in dual
31 credit courses;

32 (e) Flexible programs for older students who currently
33 are not enrolled;

34 (f) Comprehensive supplemental education programs for
35 middle school students who are below grade level in reading and
36 math;

37 (g) Teacher advisories and other supports that are
38 designed to specifically address the needs of youth most at risk
39 of dropping out of school;

40 (h) Strategies that are specifically designed to
41 improve high school graduation rate of teens at highest risk for
42 dropping out, including youth in the foster care system, pregnant
43 and parenting youth, English as a second language learners, and
44 teens with special education needs; and



45 (i) Communicating with parents and students about the
46 availability of local afterschool programs and the academic
47 enrichment and other activities the programs offer.

48 (3) The department shall gather the following data to ensure
49 that all programs are research-based and data-driven and use such
50 data for continuous program improvement:

51 (a) The total number of high school suspensions related
52 to truancy;

53 (b) Total number of students enrolled in alternative
54 programs;

55 (c) Total number of students who have been reenrolled
56 in programs with flexible schedules or community college programs;

57 (d) Total number of freshmen who have individualized
58 educational programs (IEPs);

59 (e) Total number of students who have failed Algebra I
60 or Grade 9 math;

61 (f) Total number of students who are repeating Grade 9;

62 (g) Total number of students receiving remedial
63 programming in Grade 9; and

64 (h) The percentage of children in the care of the
65 Mississippi Department of Human Services who do not graduate from
66 high school.

67 (4) In school districts involved in progressive support
68 intervention, the department shall prepare and submit each year a
69 written report that documents the following:



70 (a) The outcomes of the dropout prevention strategies
71 to date, at the school district level; and

72 (b) How the school district dropout prevention
73 strategies and activities will be modified, based on the data.

74 **SECTION 3.** (1) Children who are seventeen (17) of age may
75 not withdraw from school before graduation unless:

76 (a) The student, student's parent or guardian, and an
77 administrator agree to the withdrawal;

78 (b) At the exit interview, the student and the
79 student's parent or guardian provide written acknowledgement of
80 the withdrawal that meets the requirements of paragraph (d) of
81 this subsection;

82 (c) The school principal provides written consent for
83 the student to withdraw from school; and

84 (d) The withdrawal is:

85 (i) Due to documented financial hardship and the
86 need of the individual to be employed to support the individual's
87 family or a dependent;

88 (ii) Due to documented illness;

89 (iii) By order of a court that has jurisdiction
90 over the student; and

91 (iv) Accompanied by a written acknowledgement of a
92 withdrawal under paragraph (b) of this subsection which must
93 include a statement that the student and the student's parent or
94 guardian understand that withdrawal from school is likely to



95 reduce the student's future earnings and increase the student's
96 likelihood of being unemployed in the future.

97 (2) If a child of the age described in subsection (1) is
98 habitually absent from school and the school is unable to contact
99 the parent or guardian, the school may withdraw the child from
100 enrollment if its attempts to contact the parent or guardian by
101 telephone, regular and registered mail, and home visit are
102 documented. If a child who has been withdrawn from enrollment
103 under this subsection returns to school, or if the school
104 mistakenly withdraws the child from enrollment, the child shall be
105 reenrolled promptly.

106 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
107 and after July 1, 2024.

