

By: Representatives Harness, Paden

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 826

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-31-15 AND 37-31-61, MISSISSIPPI
 2 CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE SCHOOL BOARDS, WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE
 3 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, TO ESTABLISH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
 4 PROGRAMS IN EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT OR AUTHORIZE TWO OR MORE
 5 DISTRICTS TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR THE JOINT OPERATION OF A
 6 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM TO SERVE STUDENTS WITH THE SCHOOL
 7 DISTRICTS OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE AGREEMENT; TO BRING FORWARD
 8 SECTIONS 37-31-71, 37-31-73 AND 37-31-205, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF
 9 1972, FOR THE PURPOSE OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS; AND FOR RELATED
 10 PURPOSES.

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

12 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-31-15, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
 13 amended as follows:

14 37-31-15. The school board * * * shall cooperate with the
 15 State Board of Education in the establishment and maintenance of
 16 vocational and technical schools or classes giving instruction in
 17 vocational and technical training which does not terminate in a
 18 bachelors degree to persons in need of such instruction, and may
 19 use for paying the cost of such cooperation any monies raised by
 20 public taxation in the same manner as monies for other school
 21 purposes are used for the maintenance and support of public
 22 schools.



23 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-31-61, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
24 amended as follows:

25 37-31-61. (1) The State Board of Education is hereby
26 authorized and empowered to establish and conduct schools, classes
27 or courses, for preparing, equipping and training citizens of the
28 State of Mississippi for employment in gainful vocational and
29 technical occupations which do not terminate in a bachelors
30 degree, in conjunction with any public school, agricultural high
31 school or community/junior college.

32 (2) The trustees of such school districts, as classified and
33 defined by law, including those already having this authority, and
34 the trustees of agricultural high schools and community/junior
35 colleges * * * shall, with the consent in writing of the State
36 Board of Education, establish and conduct such schools, classes or
37 courses, under the provisions herein stated and under the general
38 supervision of the board.

39 (3) The trustees of school boards of two (2) or more school
40 districts of this state located within the same county, or for any
41 school district which encompasses an entire county, if there is no
42 vocational program within either of said school districts, are
43 authorized to enter into agreements with each other providing for
44 the construction or joint operation of a vocational education
45 center that services all students enrolled in the school districts
46 that are parties to the agreement. The agreement shall designate
47 which participating school district to the agreement shall serve



48 as fiscal agent, and among other provisions, provide for the
49 method of financing the construction and operation of the
50 facilities to house the vocational programs, and the manner in
51 which the facilities are to be controlled, operated and staffed.

52 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-31-71, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
53 brought forward as follows:

54 37-31-71. For the purposes of Sections 37-31-71 through
55 37-31-79, the term "regional education center" means all
56 facilities utilized for the carrying out of instruction on the
57 level of secondary or postsecondary education or both which are
58 jointly operated by or which accept students on a contractual
59 basis from two (2) or more school districts of this state, or for
60 any school district which encompasses an entire county.

61 **SECTION 4.** Section 37-31-73, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
62 brought forward as follows:

63 37-31-73. The various school districts, counties,
64 municipalities and community/junior college districts of this
65 state are authorized to enter into agreements between each other
66 and between the school districts and any of the boards of
67 supervisors of any county, the governing authorities of any
68 municipality, or the boards of trustees of any community/junior
69 college district providing for the construction or operation of
70 regional education centers. Any agreement entered into pursuant
71 to this section shall be subject to the approval of the State
72 Board of Education. The agreement shall designate the fiscal



73 agent, among other provisions, provide for the method of financing
74 the construction and operation of the facilities, the manner in
75 which the facilities are to be controlled, operated and staffed,
76 the basis upon which students are to be admitted to the regional
77 education center and transportation provided for students in
78 attendance at the center. The agreement or any subsequent
79 modification to it shall be spread at large upon the minutes of
80 each party to the agreement after having been duly adopted by the
81 governing authorities of each party.

82 The agreements may provide for the establishment of regional
83 education advisory councils to serve in an advisory capacity to
84 regional education centers, to be made up of representatives of
85 the board of trustees of school districts or community/junior
86 college districts which may be parties to the agreement. Regional
87 education advisory councils of the parties to the agreement will
88 operate at the will of the fiscal agent for the regional education
89 center. The fiscal agent shall have all powers designated to it
90 in the agreement by the parties to the agreement, except for the
91 power to request or require the levy of taxes or the power to
92 issue or require the issuance of any bonds, notes or other
93 evidences of indebtedness, or to call for an election on the
94 question of the issuance of any bonds, notes or other evidences of
95 indebtedness.

96 **SECTION 5.** Section 37-31-205, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
97 brought forward as follows:



98 37-31-205. (1) The State Board of Education shall have the
99 authority to:

100 (a) Expend funds received either by appropriation or
101 directly from federal or private sources;

102 (b) Channel funds to secondary schools, community and
103 junior colleges and regional vocational-technical facilities
104 according to priorities set by the board;

105 (c) Allocate funds on an annual budgetary basis;

106 (d) Set standards for and approve all vocational and
107 technical education programs in the public school system and
108 community and junior colleges or other agencies or institutions
109 which receive state funds and federal funds for such purposes,
110 including, but not limited to, the following vocational and
111 technical education programs: agriculture, trade and industry,
112 occupational home economics, consumer and homemaking education,
113 distributive education, business and office, health, industrial
114 arts, guidance services, technical education, cooperative
115 education, and all other specialized training not requiring a
116 bachelor's degree, with the exception of programs of nursing
117 education regulated under the provisions of Section 37-129-1. The
118 State Board of Education shall authorize local school boards,
119 within such school board's discretion, to offer distributive
120 education as a one-hour or two-hour block course. There shall be
121 no reduction of payments from state funding for distributive



122 education due to the selection of either the one-hour or two-hour
123 course offering;

124 (e) Set and publish licensure standards for vocational
125 and technical education personnel. The State Board of Education
126 shall recognize a vocational and technical education teacher's
127 work when school is not in session which is in the teacher's
128 particular field of instruction as a means for the teacher to
129 fulfill the requirements for renewal of the teacher's license.
130 The board shall establish, by rules and regulations, the
131 documentation of such work which must be submitted to the board
132 and the number of actual working hours required to fulfill renewal
133 requirements. If a vocational and technical education teacher who
134 does not have a bachelor's degree takes classes in fulfillment of
135 licensure renewal requirements, such classes must be in
136 furtherance of a bachelor's degree;

137 (f) Require data and information on program performance
138 from those programs receiving state funds;

139 (g) Expend funds to expand career information;

140 (h) Supervise and maintain the Division of Vocational
141 and Technical Education and to utilize, to the greatest extent
142 possible, the division as the administrative unit of the board
143 responsible for coordinating programs and services with local
144 institutions;

145 (i) Utilize appropriate staff of the State Department
146 of Education to perform services for the vocational student



147 organizations, including, but not limited to, procurement,
148 accounting services, tax services and banking services. The
149 department may also procure and pay for annual audits of the
150 vocational student organizations using vocational funds or other
151 available funds of the State Department of Education. It is the
152 intent of this provision that any related costs be paid with
153 vocational funds appropriated by the Legislature;

154 (j) Promulgate such rules and regulations necessary to
155 carry out the provisions of this chapter in accordance with
156 Section 25-43-1 et seq.;

157 (k) Set standards and approve all vocational and
158 technical education equipment and facilities purchased and/or
159 leased with state and federal vocational funds;

160 (l) Encourage provisions for lifelong learning and
161 changing personal career preferences and advancement of vocational
162 and technical education students through articulated programs
163 between high schools and community and junior colleges;

164 (m) Encourage the establishment of new linkages with
165 business and industry which will provide for a better
166 understanding of essential labor market concepts;

167 (n) Periodically review the funding and reporting
168 processes required of local school districts by the board or
169 division with the aim of simplifying or eliminating inefficient
170 practices and procedures;



171 (o) Assist in the development of high technology
172 programs and resource centers to support current and projected
173 industrial needs;

174 (p) Assist in the development of a technical assistance
175 program for business and industry which will provide for
176 industrial training and services, including the transfer of
177 information relative to new applications and advancements in
178 technology; and

179 (q) Enter into contracts and agreements with the
180 Mississippi Community College Board for conditions under which
181 vocational and technical education programs in community and
182 junior colleges shall receive state and federal funds which flow
183 through the State Board of Education for such purposes.

184 (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that no vocational
185 and technical education course or program existing on June 30,
186 1982, shall be eliminated by the State Board of Education under
187 the authority vested in paragraph (d) of subsection (1) of this
188 section prior to June 30, 1985. It is further the intent of the
189 Legislature that no vocational and technical education teacher or
190 other personnel employed on June 30, 1983, shall be discharged due
191 to licensure standards promulgated by the board under paragraph
192 (e) of subsection (1) of this section, if any such teacher or
193 personnel shall have complied with any newly published licensure
194 standards by June 30, 1985. Nothing contained in this section
195 shall be construed to abrogate or affect in any manner the



196 authority of local public school districts or community and junior
197 colleges to eliminate vocational and technical education courses
198 or programs or to discharge any vocational and technical education
199 teacher or other personnel.

200 (3) The State Board of Education and the Mississippi
201 Community College Board may provide that every vocational and
202 technical education course or program in Mississippi may integrate
203 academic and vocational-technical education through coherent
204 sequences of courses, so that students in such programs achieve
205 both academic and occupational competencies. The boards may
206 expend federal funds available from the 1990 Perkins Act, or other
207 available federal funds, for the alignment of vocational-technical
208 programs with academic programs through the accreditation process
209 and the teacher licensure process.

210 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
211 and after July 1, 2024.

