

By: Representative Roberson

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 1195

1 AN ACT TO BRING FORWARD SECTION 37-161-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF  
2 1972, WHICH CREATES THE MISSISSIPPI VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM,  
3 FOR THE PURPOSE OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

5 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-161-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
6 brought forward as follows:

7 37-161-3. (1) The Legislature finds and declares the  
8 following:

9 (a) Meeting the educational needs of children in our  
10 state's schools is of the greatest importance to the future  
11 welfare of the State of Mississippi;

12 (b) Closing the achievement gap between high-performing  
13 students, including the achievement gap among at-risk students, is  
14 a significant and present challenge;

15 (c) Providing a broader range of educational options to  
16 parents and utilizing existing resources, along with technology,  
17 may help students in the state improve their academic achievement;  
18 and



19           (d) Many of the state's school districts currently lack  
20 the capacity to provide other public school choices for students  
21 whose schools are low performing.

22           (2) There is created the Mississippi Virtual Public School  
23 Program, which is the responsibility of the State Department of  
24 Education. It is the intent of the Legislature that the  
25 Mississippi Virtual Public School established under this section  
26 provides Mississippi families with an alternative choice to access  
27 additional educational resources in an effort to improve academic  
28 achievement. The Mississippi Virtual Public School must be  
29 recognized as a public school and provide equitable treatment and  
30 resources as are other public schools in the state. Private  
31 providers, overseen by the State Department of Education, may be  
32 selected by the State Board of Education to administer, manage or  
33 operate virtual school programs in this state, including the total  
34 operation of the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program. Any  
35 private provider chosen to provide services under the provisions  
36 of this subsection shall be chosen through the Mississippi Online  
37 Course Application Process.

38           (3) Nothing in this section may be interpreted as precluding  
39 the use of computer- and Internet-based instruction for students  
40 in a virtual or remote setting utilizing the Mississippi Virtual  
41 Public School.



42 (4) As used in this section, the following words and phrases  
43 have the meanings respectively ascribed unless the context clearly  
44 requires otherwise:

45 (a) "Mississippi Virtual Public School" means a public  
46 school in which the state uses technology in order to deliver  
47 instruction to students via the Internet in a virtual or remote  
48 setting.

49 (b) "Sponsor" means the public school district is  
50 responsible for the academic process for each student, including,  
51 but not limited to, enrollment, awarding of credit and monitoring  
52 progress.

53 (5) (a) The State Board of Education shall establish the  
54 Mississippi Virtual Public School beginning in school year  
55 2006-2007.

56 (b) Students who enroll in the Mississippi Virtual  
57 Public School may reside anywhere in the State of Mississippi.

58 (6) Subject to appropriation, the Mississippi Virtual Public  
59 School shall provide to each student enrolled in the school all  
60 necessary instructional materials. Subject to appropriation, the  
61 sponsored school must ensure that each student is provided access  
62 to the necessary technology, such as a computer and printer, and  
63 to an Internet connection for schoolwork purposes.

64 (7) The Mississippi Department of Education shall have  
65 approval authority for all coursework and policy of the  
66 Mississippi Virtual Public School.



67           (8) Each teacher employed by or participating in the  
68 delivery of instruction through the Mississippi Virtual Public  
69 School must meet all qualifications for licensure in the State of  
70 Mississippi.

71           (9) Any student who meets state residency requirements may  
72 enroll in the Mississippi Virtual Public School.

73           (10) Enrollment in the Mississippi Virtual Public School  
74 shall be free of charge to students. The costs associated with  
75 the operations of the virtual school must be shared by the State  
76 Department of Education, subject to appropriation, and/or the  
77 local school districts. Once the State Department of Education  
78 appropriation and the local school district budgeted funds for  
79 Mississippi Virtual Public School have been expended and students  
80 choose to enroll in online courses, the costs of the online  
81 courses may be the responsibility of the students' parents or  
82 guardians.

83           **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
84 and after July 1, 2024.

