

By: Senator(s) Simmons (13th), Simmons
(12th)

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2666

1 AN ACT TO ENACT THE SAVE OUR UNDERFUNDED LOCAL SCHOOLS ACT OR
 2 SOULS ACT; TO DEFINE TERMS; TO CREATE THE SAVE OUR UNDERFUNDED
 3 LOCAL SCHOOLS GRANT PROGRAM TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT
 4 OF PUBLIC SAFETY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENSURING SCHOOL AND SCHOOL
 5 DISTRICT BUILDINGS ARE EQUIPPED WITH SAFETY AND SECURITY UPGRADES,
 6 INCLUDING THE STARTUP COSTS NECESSARY FOR EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT TO
 7 HAVE A PUBLIC SAFETY OR SECURITY DEPARTMENT; TO PROVIDE THAT EACH
 8 SCHOOL DISTRICT SHALL RECEIVE A MINIMUM AMOUNT UNDER THE GRANT
 9 PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE THAT THE REMAINING FUNDS IN THE GRANT PROGRAM
 10 SHALL BE DISTRIBUTED UPON APPLICATION; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT
 11 TO PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS TO ADMINISTER THE GRANT
 12 PROGRAM; TO CREATE THE SOULS ACT FUND AS A SPECIAL FUND IN THE
 13 STATE TREASURY; TO PROVIDE THAT MONIES APPROPRIATED OUT OF THE
 14 FUND MAY BE USED TO REIMBURSE ACTUAL OVERSIGHT COSTS UP TO A
 15 CERTAIN AMOUNT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

17 **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the
 18 "Save Our Underfunded Local Schools Act" or "SOULS Act."

19 **SECTION 2.** For purposes of this act, the following words
 20 shall have the meanings ascribed herein unless the context clearly
 21 requires otherwise:

22 (a) "Department" means the Department of Public Safety.

23 (b) "Grant Program" means the Save Our Underfunded
 24 Local Schools Grant Program established in this act.



25 (c) "School" means public school districts,
26 agricultural high schools, the Mississippi School for the Deaf and
27 Blind, the Mississippi School of the Arts and the Mississippi
28 School for Mathematics and Science and public charter schools.

29 **SECTION 3.** (1) There is established the Save Our
30 Underfunded Local Schools Grant Program which shall be
31 administered by the department for the purpose of ensuring school
32 and school district buildings are equipped with safety and
33 security upgrades, including the startup costs necessary for each
34 school to have a public safety or security department.

35 (2) The department shall distribute grants to the schools.
36 Each school shall receive a grant in the amount of at least Fifty
37 Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) under the grant program by October
38 1, 2024. The remaining funds in the grant program shall be
39 distributed upon application to the department until the funds are
40 depleted.

41 (3) The department, in conjunction with the Department of
42 Education, shall promulgate rules and regulations to administer
43 the grant program. The rules and regulations promulgated by the
44 department may include the following considerations for recipients
45 of grant funds:

46 (a) The state of the security and safety upgrades at
47 the school;

48 (b) The needs of the individual schools, including
49 existing facility upgrades and geographic considerations;



50 (c) The average response time of local law enforcement;
51 (d) The capabilities of local law enforcement; and
52 (e) Any other relevant factor to be determined by the
53 department or recommended by the Department of Education.

54 (4) The department shall provide an annual report to the
55 Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House and Governor concerning
56 the distribution of funds under this grant program. The report
57 shall be filed by December 1 of each year.

58 **SECTION 4.** (1) There is created a special fund in the State
59 Treasury to be known as the "SOULS Act Fund" which shall consist
60 of monies from any source designated for deposit into the fund.
61 Unexpended amounts remaining in the fund at the end of a fiscal
62 year shall not lapse into the State General Fund, and any
63 investment earnings or interest earned on amounts in the fund
64 shall be deposited to the credit of the fund.

65 (2) (a) Monies in the fund shall be disbursed by the
66 department for the purposes described in this act.

67 (b) In addition to the purposes in paragraph (a) of
68 this subsection, monies appropriated out of the fund may be used
69 to reimburse reasonable actual and necessary oversight costs
70 incurred by the department in providing grants or loans under this
71 section. The department shall maintain an accounting of actual
72 costs and expenses incurred for which reimbursement is sought for
73 each grant or loan. Reimbursement of reasonable, actual and
74 necessary costs and expenses for assistance shall not exceed one



75 and twenty-five one-hundredths percent (1.25%) of the monies
76 appropriated out of the fund. Reimbursements made under this
77 paragraph shall satisfy any applicable federal tax law
78 requirements.

79 **SECTION 5.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
80 and after its passage.

