

By: Senator(s) Boyd, Parker

To: Public Health and
Welfare; Universities and
Colleges

SENATE BILL NO. 2727
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MISSISSIPPI K-12 AND POSTSECONDARY
2 MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE DRAWING ON AVAILABLE DATA TO DETERMINE
3 CHALLENGES IN MISSISSIPPI AS IT RELATES TO THE MENTAL HEALTH OF
4 STUDENTS RANGING FROM K-12 THROUGH THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND
5 UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS, ASSESS THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESOURCES
6 CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO YOUTH SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION, TRAUMA AND
7 SUICIDAL IDEATION, AND DETERMINE WHERE GAPS EXIST IN SERVICE
8 DELIVERY AND TREATMENT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK
9 FORCE; TO REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO REVIEW AND MAKE
10 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE REGARDING AVAILABLE RESOURCES
11 AND GAPS IN RESOURCES TO ADDRESS THIS CRISIS; TO PROVIDE FOR THE
12 GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TASK FORCE; TO REQUIRE THE TASK
13 FORCE TO DEVELOP AND REPORT ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
14 PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO THE LEGISLATURE ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1,
15 2024; TO RECONSTITUTE THE EARLY INTERVENTION TASK FORCE WITH A
16 GOAL TO COLLABORATE WITH THE STATE AGENCY COORDINATING PART C OF
17 IDEA TO DESIGN A NEW SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL AND MAKE CHANGES TO
18 THE EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM; TO SET THE TASK FORCE'S DUTIES; TO
19 REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO PREPARE A FINAL REPORT TO THE
20 LEGISLATURE; TO REQUIRE THE STATE AGENCY COORDINATING PART C OF
21 IDEA TO PREPARE AND DELIVER A REPORT THAT PROVIDES FOR POSSIBLE
22 SOLUTIONS; TO DISSOLVE THE TASK FORCE UPON PRESENTATION OF THE
23 REPORT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

25 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby established the "Mississippi
26 K-12 and Postsecondary Mental Health Task Force," created to
27 address growing concerns related to student mental health. The
28 goal of the task force shall include, but not be limited to,



29 drawing on available data to determine challenges in Mississippi
30 as it relates to the mental health of students ranging from K-12
31 through the community college and university systems; assessing
32 public and private resources currently available to students who
33 need help managing mental health issues; assessing training and
34 procedures in place for teachers, school district personnel and
35 community college and university personnel; and determining where
36 gaps exist in training and resources; exploring partnerships
37 across communities to better serve students; and examining
38 successful programs in Mississippi and across the nation. The
39 task force shall develop recommendations to the Legislature on
40 changes to policy and laws in Mississippi with a goal of better
41 identifying students at all levels struggling with mental health
42 issues; training school, community college and university
43 personnel related to student mental health, and thus improving
44 health outcomes and the probability of student success.

45 (2) The members of the task force shall be as follows:

46 (a) The Chairmen of the Education Committees of the
47 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
48 or their designees from their respective committee membership;

49 (b) The Chairmen of the Medicaid Committees of the
50 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
51 or their designees from their respective committee membership;

52 (c) The Chairmen of the Universities and Colleges
53 Committees of the Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of



54 Representatives, or their designees from their respective
55 committee membership;

56 (d) The Superintendent of the Mississippi Department of
57 Education, or his or her designee;

58 (e) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
59 Department of Mental Health, or his or her designee;

60 (f) The Director of the Mississippi Division of
61 Medicaid, or his or her designee;

62 (g) The State Health Officer of the Mississippi
63 Department of Health, or his or her designee;

64 (h) One (1) psychiatrist with expertise in treating
65 children to be appointed by the Governor;

66 (i) One (1) clinical psychologist with expertise in
67 treating children appointed by the Lieutenant Governor;

68 (j) One (1) school psychologist employed or contracted
69 by a Mississippi Public School District, to be named by the
70 Mississippi Association of Psychologists in the Schools;

71 (k) One (1) public school teacher appointed by the
72 Governor;

73 (l) One (1) employee of a university counseling center,
74 or a person otherwise responsible for coordinating or providing
75 student mental health services on campus, appointed by the
76 Governor;

77 (m) One (1) public school counselor appointed by the
78 Lieutenant Governor;



79 (n) One (1) employee of a community college counseling
80 center, or a person responsible for coordinating or providing
81 student mental health services on campus, appointed by the
82 Lieutenant Governor;

83 (o) One (1) school nurse employed in a Mississippi
84 public school to be appointed by the Superintendent of Education;

85 (p) One (1) employee of a non-profit provider of mental
86 and behavioral health services to youth, appointed by the
87 Lieutenant Governor;

88 (q) One (1) employee of a community mental health
89 provider that provides services to a Mississippi public school
90 school, appointed by the Governor;

91 (r) One (1) member of the Mississippi Youth Council,
92 selected by the members of the council;

93 (s) One (1) family advocacy representative to be
94 appointed by the Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition
95 for Citizens with Disabilities; and

96 (t) The Chairmen of the Public Health Committees of the
97 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
98 or their designees from their respective committee membership.

99 (3) The task force shall meet within forty-five (45) days of
100 the effective date of this act and shall evaluate the current
101 data, resources, and laws and policies of the State of
102 Mississippi. Specifically, the task force shall:



103 (a) Collect and analyze publicly available data and
104 statistics related to the current state of student mental health,
105 K-12 through the community college and university level;

106 (b) Explore the impact of trauma and mental health
107 issues on student behavior, dropout and graduation rates, academic
108 achievement, employment and related issues;

109 (c) Evaluate currently available resources for
110 addressing student mental health including, but not limited to,
111 partnerships with nonprofits or experts, telehealth opportunities,
112 inpatient and outpatient resources;

113 (d) Review mental health training and professional
114 development provided to K-12 school personnel and school personnel
115 at community colleges and universities for classroom management,
116 identification, referral, intervention and prevention;

117 (e) Evaluate successful strategies for addressing
118 challenges in student mental health in Mississippi and across the
119 nation;

120 (f) Review the current workforce landscapes as it
121 relates to psychologists, nurses, counselors, behavior
122 interventionists and others who work in schools, community
123 colleges and universities, and consider strategies to recruit
124 sufficient personnel if there are workforce strategies;

125 (g) Explore the effect of a multi-tiered wellness
126 program that is conducive to growth, achievement, cultivating



127 resilience, motivation and culturally sensitive personal
128 development; and

129 (h) Review any other matters related to the above
130 issues or student mental health in Mississippi.

131 (4) The task force may request the assistance of the
132 Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Community College
133 Board, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, Mississippi
134 Department of Health, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health,
135 the University of Mississippi School of Medicine; the Mississippi
136 Division of Medicaid or any other related agency, entity or
137 organization with expertise in student mental health issues and
138 services.

139 (5) The Chairmen of the Education Committees in the
140 Mississippi Senate and Mississippi House of Representatives shall
141 call the first meeting. The members of the task force shall elect
142 a chair from among the members at its first meeting. The task
143 force shall develop and report its findings and recommendations to
144 the Mississippi Legislature on or before October 1, 2024. A
145 majority of the membership shall be required to approve any final
146 report and recommendation. Meetings of the task force shall be
147 held at the State Capitol; however, if it is not feasible for the
148 task force to hold an in-person meeting, the task force may
149 convene utilizing an online meeting platform that is accessible
150 for viewing by the public.



151 (6) The Joint Legislative Committee on Performance
152 Evaluation and Expenditure Review shall provide necessary clerical
153 support for the meetings of the task force and the preparation of
154 the report.

155 **SECTION 2.** (1) To complete the work it commenced in 2023,
156 the Early Intervention Task Force created by Chapter 487, Laws of
157 2023, and dissolved December 1, 2023, is hereby reconstituted to
158 serve in an advisory capacity to assist the state agency
159 coordinating Part C of IDEA in implementing a new service delivery
160 model. The goal of the task force shall be to collaborate with
161 the state agency coordinating Part C of IDEA to design a new
162 service delivery model and make changes to the Early Intervention
163 Program.

164 (2) The members of the task force shall be as follows:

165 (a) The Chairmen of the Education Committees of the
166 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
167 or their designee from their respective committee membership;

168 (b) The Chairmen of the Appropriations Committees of
169 the Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of
170 Representatives, or their designee from their respective committee
171 membership;

172 (c) The Chairmen of the Public Health Committees of the
173 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
174 or their designee from their respective committee membership;

175 (d) One (1) member of the Mississippi State Senate, to



176 be named by the Lieutenant Governor; and one (1) member of the
177 Mississippi House of Representatives, to be named by the Speaker
178 of the House of Representatives, who are interested in early
179 intervention issues;

180 (e) The State Health Officer of the Mississippi
181 Department of Health or a designated deputy;

182 (f) One (1) designee who is a direct service provider
183 in the First Steps Early Intervention Program, to be named by the
184 State Health Officer;

185 (g) One (1) faculty member from the Social Science
186 Research Center (SSRC) at Mississippi State University, to be
187 named by the Director of the SSRC;

188 (h) One (1) developmental-behavioral pediatrician with
189 expertise in early childhood systems building, to be named by the
190 Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical Center;

191 (i) One (1) general pediatrician, to be named by the
192 Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics;

193 (j) One (1) clinical psychologist with expertise in
194 social-emotional health of infants and toddlers, to be named by
195 the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical
196 Center;

197 (k) One (1) school psychologist employed by a school
198 district, to be named by the Mississippi Association of
199 Psychologists in the Schools;



200 (l) One (1) early interventionist/development
201 therapist, to be named by the State Health Officer;

202 (m) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Early
203 Learning Alliance;

204 (n) One (1) family advocacy representative to be
205 appointed by the Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition
206 for Citizens with Disabilities;

207 (o) One (1) parent representative with current
208 experience with early intervention to be appointed by the
209 Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with
210 Disabilities;

211 (p) One (1) faculty member from the College of Health
212 Sciences at Jackson State University, to be named by the president
213 of such university;

214 (q) One (1) pediatrician, to be named by the
215 Mississippi Region of the National Medical Association;

216 (r) The Executive Director of the Division of Medicaid,
217 Office of the Governor, or the executive director's designee; and

218 (s) The Director of the State Department of Education's
219 Early Childhood Education Office, or such director's designee.

220 (3) A faculty member from each of the universities within
221 the institutions of higher learning with an early childhood
222 development program or early intervention program may be named by
223 the president of each university to assist the task force. In



224 addition, the Executive Director of the Center for Mississippi
225 Health Policy shall aid the task force.

226 (4) The task force shall meet within forty-five (45) days of
227 the effective date of this act and shall commence its
228 responsibilities set out in subsection (5) of this section.

229 (5) Specifically, in collaboration with the state agency
230 coordinating Part C of IDEA, the task force shall:

231 (a) Review billing and reimbursement processes and
232 rates for early intervention services in Mississippi and in other
233 states, to ensure a timely receipt of payment to providers. In
234 performing this function, a recommendation shall be made to the
235 Legislature by January 1, 2025, on a more efficient system for
236 providing compensation to providers and for billing and collecting
237 from third-party payors;

238 (b) Evaluate early intervention service delivery
239 models, including a hub or hybrid model involving university
240 participation and determine how this model may impact the training
241 of students and delivery of services to members of the eligible
242 population. In performing this function, a recommendation shall
243 be made to the Legislature that will offer a service delivery
244 structure to enhance the efficient and effective delivery of
245 quality services to the eligible population; and

246 (c) Review any other matters related to the above
247 issues or related to early intervention services.



248 (6) The state agency coordinating Part C of IDEA and the
249 task force may request the assistance of the Social Science
250 Research Center at Mississippi State University, the Mississippi
251 Early Learning Alliance or any other related entity or
252 organization with expertise in early intervention services.

253 (7) The members of the task force shall elect a chair from
254 among the members. The task force shall develop and report its
255 findings and recommendations for proposed legislation to the
256 Legislature in response to the proposal of the state agency
257 coordinating Part C of IDEA to make changes to the service
258 delivery structure for the program and changes to the way the
259 state pays service providers and recoups payments from third-party
260 payors, which shall be due to the task force and Legislature by
261 December 1, 2024. A quorum of the membership shall be required to
262 approve any final report and recommendation. Members of the task
263 force shall be reimbursed for necessary travel expense in the same
264 manner as public employees are reimbursed for official duties from
265 any available funds, and members of the Legislature shall be
266 reimbursed in the same manner as for attending out-of-session
267 committee meetings.

268 (8) The Joint Legislative Committee on Performance
269 Evaluation and Expenditure Review shall provide necessary clerical
270 support for the meetings of the task force and research support as
271 needed for the preparation of the report. Proposed legislation



272 shall be prepared by the Legislative Services Offices of the
273 Senate and House as requested.

274 (9) The task force shall be dissolved upon presentation of
275 its report.

276 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
277 and after its passage.

