

By: Representative Scott

To: Education;  
Appropriations A

## HOUSE BILL NO. 366

1       AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO CREATE  
2 A SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) PILOT  
3 PROGRAM IN CERTAIN SCHOOL DISTRICTS PRIMARILY IN THE DELTA FOR  
4 HIGH PERFORMING STUDENTS IN GRADES 4 THROUGH 8; TO PRESCRIBE  
5 CERTAIN COMPONENTS OF THE STEM PILOT PROGRAM; TO AUTHORIZE SCHOOL  
6 DISTRICTS TO PAY AN ANNUAL SALARY SUPPLEMENT TO A TEACHER SERVING  
7 AS THE ADVISOR TO THE STEM PILOT PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE PARTICIPATING  
8 SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ANNUALLY SUBMIT DATA ON THE PILOT PROGRAM TO  
9 THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT TO  
10 COMPILE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA INTO A REPORT FOR THE HOUSE AND  
11 SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

12       WHEREAS, recent reports reflect that the State of Mississippi  
13 is experiencing a critical shortage of young persons pursuing  
14 higher education and careers in science, technology, engineering  
15 and mathematics (STEM) fields, thereby resulting in an  
16 ever-growing lack of professionals available to meet the workforce  
17 demands of the state and the needs of her citizenry; and

18       WHEREAS, the Center for Mathematics and Science Education at  
19 the University of Mississippi recently reported that during the  
20 2022-2023 school year, ninety-four school districts in the state  
21 experienced a critical teacher shortage, with middle school math

22 having the highest number of teacher vacancies of all subject  
23 areas; and

24 WHEREAS, according to data from the Mississippi Hospital  
25 Association, the vacancy rate of registered nurses in  
26 Mississippi's hospitals in 2022 was 24.5%, the highest it has been  
27 since 2010 when the same rate was only 4.3%; and

28 WHEREAS, Mississippi ranks 49th in the number of active  
29 physicians per population according to the 2021 State Physician  
30 Workforce Data Report published by the Association of American  
31 Medical Colleges; and

32 WHEREAS, according to a September 2023 publication by the  
33 State Auditor, while engineering programs in Mississippi account  
34 for seven of the ten highest-paying degree programs, only 36% of  
35 engineering graduates from the 2015-2017 graduation cohort  
36 remained working in Mississippi by 2020; and

37 WHEREAS, the overall welfare of the State of Mississippi  
38 demands that a wide array of innovative opportunities aimed at  
39 reversing these alarming trends in STEM fields be created to  
40 expose students at all educational levels to the many STEM jobs  
41 available and to prepare them, from an early age, to succeed in  
42 attaining an education leading to a meaningful and rewarding  
43 career: NOW, THEREFORE,

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

45 **SECTION 1.** (1) The State Department of Education shall  
46 establish a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics



47 (STEM) pilot program designed to motivate eligible students in  
48 Grades 4 through 8 to pursue opportunities in STEM fields by  
49 introducing a variety of STEM careers to participating students  
50 and creating demanding yet rewarding challenges aimed at preparing  
51 those students for success in rigorous STEM academic courses as  
52 they progress to higher levels of education. The pilot program  
53 must be implemented during the 2025-2026 school year in school  
54 districts situated in no less than thirteen (13) counties situated  
55 in the Delta region and in Jasper, Clarke and Jones Counties. The  
56 State Department of Education shall select school districts for  
57 participation in the pilot program, with consideration given to  
58 any school district that expresses a particular desire to be a  
59 part of the pilot program.

60 (2) In order to be a participant in the STEM pilot program,  
61 a student must be identified by a school as being among the  
62 students performing at the highest levels on the most recent  
63 statewide assessment in mathematics. The school in which a  
64 student is enrolled shall determine the number of students which  
65 the STEM pilot program may accommodate and shall identify the  
66 corresponding number of students who scored the highest on that  
67 assessment. Selection for participation in the program must be  
68 done on an annual basis; however, a school district, in its  
69 discretion, may allow a participant who fails to meet eligibility  
70 criteria in a succeeding school year to remain in the program if  
71 the student demonstrates a continued willingness and interest.



(3) The STEM pilot program may include the following

age-appropriate components:

(a) Introduction to a variety of occupations in all

75 STEM fields by arranging for guest speakers in STEM careers to  
76 make school presentations that include a seminar type question and  
77 answer session and which highlight the rewarding aspects of their  
78 profession and how their jobs contribute to their communities;

(b) Collaboration with local employers in STEM fields

80 through which field trips to the worksite may be arranged for  
81 pilot program participants;

(c) For students expressing an aptitude for or a

83 continued interest in a particular STEM field, an opportunity, if  
84 feasible depending on the student's age, for the student to shadow  
85 a professional in the person's employment;

(d) Field trips to local colleges to introduce students

87 to a variety of STEM programs of study, designed to motivate  
88 participants and create an expectation of pursuing higher  
89 education notwithstanding the fact that no one in a student's  
90 family may have attended college;

(e) Introduction to the many scholarships, grants and

92 other forms of financial assistance available to students for  
93 higher education so that no student determines college is not  
94 option based on cost;

(f) Academic challenges designed to quiz students on

96 information presented on particular fields, whether by outside



97 presenters or through informational sessions by teachers in the  
98 school; and

99 (g) Any other components recommended by the State  
100 Department of Education which are designed to inspire and motivate  
101 students to pursue educational opportunities leading to a career  
102 in a STEM field.

103 (4) Each school participating in the STEM pilot program  
104 shall select a teacher to serve as the STEM program advisor. The  
105 program advisor may be paid an annual salary supplement from any  
106 funds that are available to the district.

107 (5) Each participating school district shall prepare and  
108 submit a report to the State Department of Education at the end of  
109 each school year detailing the activities of the STEM pilot  
110 program. The report must include, but need not be limited to, the  
111 number of participants by grade level, the number of students  
112 interested in remaining in the program in the succeeding school  
113 year, whether participants' performance on academic assessments  
114 improved, a description of the activities in which students  
115 participated, and such other information that the department may  
116 require. Before December 1, 2028, and each year thereafter, the  
117 department shall submit a compiled report based on the  
118 participating school districts' reports to the Education  
119 Committees of the House of Representatives and Senate with  
120 recommendations on whether the pilot program should be made  
121 permanent in all school districts in the state.



122           **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
123 and after July 1, 2025.

