

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



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

(2) In order to be a participant in the STEM pilot program, a student must be identified by a school as being among the students performing at the highest levels on the most recent statewide assessment in mathematics. The school in which a student is enrolled shall determine the number of students which the STEM pilot program may accommodate and shall identify the corresponding number of students who scored the highest on that assessment. Selection for participation in the program must be done on an annual basis; however, a school district, in its discretion, may allow a participant who fails to meet eligibility criteria in a succeeding school year to remain in the program if 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 STEM fields by arranging for guest speakers in STEM careers to make school presentations that include a seminar type question and answer session and which highlight the rewarding aspects of their profession and how their jobs contribute to their communities;

(b) Collaboration with local employers in STEM fields through which field trips to the worksite may be arranged for pilot program participants;

(c) For students expressing an aptitude for or a continued interest in a particular STEM field, an opportunity, if feasible depending on the student's age, for the student to shadow a professional in the person's employment;

(d) Field trips to local colleges to introduce students to a variety of STEM programs of study, designed to motivate participants and create an expectation of pursuing higher education notwithstanding the fact that no one in a student's family may have attended college;

(e) Introduction to the many scholarships, grants and other forms of financial assistance available to students for higher education so that no student determines college is not an option based on cost;

(f) Academic challenges designed to quiz students on 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.

