

By: Representative Scott

To: Education;
Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 370

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE AN ALLOCATION OF FUNDS UNDER THE
2 MISSISSIPPI STUDENT FUNDING FORMULA TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAVING THE
3 HIGHEST INCIDENCES OF CRIME AND VIOLENCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF
4 EMPLOYING SOCIAL WORKERS; TO DIRECT THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF
5 EDUCATION TO DETERMINE WHICH SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHALL RECEIVE
6 ALLOCATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORKERS; TO REQUIRE SOCIAL WORKERS EMPLOYED
7 WITH THOSE FUNDS TO BE APPROPRIATELY LICENSED; TO AUTHORIZE THE
8 STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS
9 CONCERNING THE ACTIVITIES OF SOCIAL WORKERS; TO REQUIRE THE STATE
10 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
11 JOINTLY ESTABLISH A PROGRAM TO MAKE THE SERVICES OF SOCIAL WORKERS
12 ACCESSIBLE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE STATE VIA VIDEO
13 CONFERENCING MEANS; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
14 EMPLOY TEN SOCIAL WORKERS TO STAFF THE VIDEO CONFERENCING PROGRAM;
15 TO AUTHORIZE SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELORS WHO IDENTIFY A NEED FOR
16 THE SERVICES OF A SOCIAL WORKER TO ARRANGE FOR THOSE SERVICES VIA
17 THE VIDEO CONFERENCING PROGRAM; TO AMEND SECTION 37-151-209,
18 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, IN CONFORMITY TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS
19 ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

21 SECTION 1. (1) Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year,
22 the State Department of Education shall allocate sufficient
23 funding under the Mississippi Student Funding Formula to those
24 school districts designated under subsection (2) of this section
25 for the purpose of employing a social worker.

26 (2) The State Department of Education shall designate school
27 districts to receive an allocation for the purpose of employing a
28 social worker. The districts must be selected according to
29 greatest need, as indicated by records of the State Department of
30 Education and the Division of Youth Services of the Department of
31 Human Services which reflect those school districts having the
32 highest incidences of crime, violence, Supplemental Nutrition
33 Assistance Program (SNAP) participation and unemployment.

43 (5) To qualify for total funding formula funds, school
44 social workers must be full-time professional personnel and must
45 spend at least seventy-five percent (75%) of their work time in a
46 direct relationship with students. School social workers may not
47 devote more than twenty-five percent (25%) of the work day to
48 administrative activities related to their social work.

49 (6) The State Board of Education may adopt rules and
50 regulations regarding the activities of the school social workers.



51 School social workers may perform services that are not
52 inconsistent with those rules and regulations.

53 (7) This section does not prohibit a school district from
54 employing social workers with local funds.

55 **SECTION 2.** (1) The State Department of Education and the
56 Department of Human Services, acting jointly, shall establish a
57 program to make certain services by licensed social workers
58 available in the public schools throughout the state. Under the
59 program, the Department of Human Services shall employ ten (10)
60 social workers who meet the licensing qualifications established
61 by the State Department of Education for school social workers.
62 The social workers must be housed in the Department of Human
63 Services, which is responsible for operating the program, and must
64 be accessible to schools throughout the state via video
65 conferencing means.

66 (2) Whenever a school guidance counselor identifies a crisis
67 or other need within the school setting which merits the guidance
68 and counseling of a licensed social worker and the school district
69 involved does not employ a social worker, the counselor may
70 contact the office of the social workers employed under subsection
71 (1) of this section to make arrangements for the necessary
72 guidance and counseling services. The counselor shall provide any
73 information as may be necessary for the social worker to assess
74 the specific situation in the school. If the counselor and social
75 worker determine that the services of the social worker are



76 appropriate, the school guidance counselor, in consultation with
77 the social worker, shall schedule a conference with all interested
78 parties, during which the social worker shall participate in the
79 meeting through video conferencing means.

80 (3) Whenever services are provided by a social worker via
81 video conferencing means under this section, the school guidance
82 counselor shall take any precautions as may be necessary to afford
83 the person or persons receiving guidance and counseling services
84 the same confidentiality and privacy protections to which those
85 persons otherwise would be entitled.

86 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-151-209, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
87 amended as follows:

88 37-151-209. (1) Allocations to school districts or charter
89 schools made by the State Department of Education on the basis of
90 the count of students in student categories established for the
91 purpose of applying various weights under Sections 37-151-200
92 through 37-151-215 are intended only to generate total
93 appropriation amounts for school funding. Except as otherwise
94 required by applicable state or federal law or by applicable
95 rules, regulations, policies, or order of the State Board of
96 Education and the State Department of Education, a school district
97 or charter school may exercise full autonomy in the spending of
98 all funds allocated under the formula to the district or charter
99 school so long as funds are expended in the manner determined by



100 the school board or governing board to best meet the needs of the
101 student population of the school district or charter school.

102 (2) The State Department of Education shall allocate
103 sufficient funds under the total funding formula to designated
104 school districts for the purpose of employing a social worker, as
105 provided for in Section 1 of this act.

106 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
107 and after July 1, 2025.

