

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.

34           (3) The State Department of Education may increase the  
35 number of social worker positions funded each year beyond the  
36 above requirements as additional funding is made available.

37           (4) Any individual employed by a school district with funds  
38 allotted under this section must be licensed appropriately as a  
39 social worker under Chapter 53, Title 73, Mississippi Code of  
40 1972. The State Department of Education shall specify which  
41 license a social worker must hold as a qualification for being  
42 employed in a position funded under this section.

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.



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

