

By: Representative Creekmore IV

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 567

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-3-82 AND 37-7-321, MISSISSIPPI
2 CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND LOCAL LAW
3 ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES THAT EMPLOY INDIVIDUALS TO SERVE AS SCHOOL
4 RESOURCE OFFICERS TO PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING THAT
5 IS EVIDENCED-BASED AND APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL
6 HEALTH; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

8 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-3-82, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
9 amended as follows:

10 37-3-82. (1) There is hereby established the Mississippi
11 Community Oriented Policing Services in Schools (MCOPS) grant
12 program in the State Department of Education to provide funding,
13 pursuant to specific appropriation by the Legislature therefor, to
14 assist law enforcement agencies in providing additional School
15 Resource Officers to engage in community policing in and around
16 primary and secondary schools. The MCOPS program shall authorize
17 the State Department of Education to make grants to increase
18 deployment of law enforcement officers in order (a) to increase or
19 enhance community policing in this state, (b) that trained, sworn
20 enforcement officers assigned to schools play an integral part in



21 the development and/or enhancement of a comprehensive school
22 safety plan, and (c) that the presence of these officers shall
23 provide schools with a direct link to local law enforcement
24 agencies.

25 (2) The MCOPS program shall meet the following requirements
26 and standards:

27 (a) This program shall provide an incentive for law
28 enforcement agencies to build collaborative partnerships with the
29 school community and to use community policing efforts to combat
30 school violence and implement educational programs to improve
31 student and school safety.

32 (b) The additional School Resource Officers must devote
33 at least seventy-five percent (75%) of their time to work in and
34 around primary and secondary schools, in addition to the time that
35 School Resource Officers are devoting in the absence of the MCOPS
36 in Schools grant.

37 (c) Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, the MCOPS
38 in Schools program shall provide a minimum state contribution of
39 up to Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00) per officer position over
40 the one-year grant period, to be matched from local funds on a
41 50/50 matching basis. Officers paid with MCOPS funds may be
42 employed by the local law enforcement agency or by the local
43 school district. MCOPS funds may be used to pay for entry-level
44 salaries and benefits of newly trained additional School Resource
45 Officers and may be used to pay the salaries and benefits of



46 School Resource Officers employed prior to July 1, 2013. All
47 jurisdictions that apply must demonstrate that they have primary
48 law enforcement authority over the school(s) identified in their
49 application and demonstrate their inability to implement this
50 project without state assistance. Schools or law enforcement
51 agencies may not reduce its overall federal, state, locally funded
52 level of sworn officers (including other School Resource Officers
53 or other sworn officers assigned to the schools) as a result of
54 applying for or receiving MCOPS in Schools grant funding. MCOPS
55 in Schools funding may be used to rehire sworn officers previously
56 employed who have been laid off for financial reasons unrelated to
57 the availability of the MCOPS in Schools grant, but must obtain
58 prior written approval from the State Department of Education.
59 MCOPS in Schools funding may be used to train school resource
60 officers. In order to be eligible for such program, each local
61 school board desiring to participate shall apply to the State
62 Department of Education by May 31 before the beginning of the
63 applicable fiscal year on forms provided by the department. The
64 State Department of Education shall determine by July 1 of each
65 succeeding year which local school districts have submitted
66 approved applications for School Resource Officer funding.

67 (d) School Resource Officers (SROs) may serve in a
68 variety of roles, including, but not limited to, that of a law
69 enforcement officer/safety specialist, law-related educator, and
70 problem-solver/community liaison. These officers may teach



71 programs such as crime prevention, substance abuse prevention, and
72 gang resistance as well as monitor and assist troubled students
73 through mentoring programs. The School Resource Officer(s) may
74 also identify physical changes in the environment that may reduce
75 crime in and around the schools, as well as assist in developing
76 school policies which address criminal activity and school safety.
77 The application must also include a Memorandum of Understanding
78 (MOU), signed by the law enforcement executive and the appropriate
79 school official(s), to document the roles and responsibilities to
80 be undertaken by the law enforcement agency and the educational
81 school partner(s) through this collaborative effort. The
82 application must also include a Narrative Addendum to document
83 that the School Resource Officer(s) will be assigned to work in
84 and around primary or secondary schools and provide supporting
85 documentation in the following areas: problem identification and
86 justification, community policing strategies to be used by the
87 officers, quality and level of commitment to the effort, and the
88 link to community policing.

89 (e) All agencies receiving awards through the MCOPS in
90 Schools program are required to send the School Resource Officer
91 position(s) funded by this grant, to the Mississippi Law
92 Enforcement Officers' Training Academy where they shall be
93 required to participate in training through the Advanced Law
94 Enforcement Rapid Response Training Program at the academy, with
95 the cost to be defrayed from the MCOPS program. The MCOPS Office



of the State Department of Education will reimburse grantees for training, per diem, travel, and lodging costs for attendance of required participants up to a maximum of One Thousand Two Hundred Dollars (\$1,200.00) per person attending. Applicants receiving an MCOPS in Schools grant, will receive additional training information following notification of the grant award. The MCOPS in Schools training requirement must be completed prior to the end of twelve-month grant funding for officer positions.

(f) Each school district that employs or enters into a interlocal agreement with a local law enforcement agency for the purpose of providing school resource officers to the schools within the local school district shall be provided Mental Health First Aid training that is evidence-based and approved by the Department of Mental Health to all of those officers as a component of their initial minimum level of law enforcement training requirements and any required continuing education or certification training during the time of continued employment by the school district or with the local law enforcement agency.

(3) The State Department of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations prescribing procedures for the application, expenditure requirements and the administration of the Mississippi Community Oriented Policing Services in Schools (MCOPS) program established in this section, and shall make a report on the implementation of the MCOPS program with any recommendations to the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature.



121 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-7-321, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
122 amended as follows:

123 37-7-321. (1) The school board of any school district
124 within the State of Mississippi, in its discretion, may employ one
125 or more persons as security personnel and may designate such
126 persons as peace officers in or on any property operated for
127 school purposes by such board upon their taking such oath and
128 making such bond as required of a constable of the county in which
129 the school district is situated.

130 (2) Any person employed by a school board as a security
131 guard or school resource officer or in any other position that has
132 the powers of a peace officer must receive a minimum level of
133 basic law enforcement training, as jointly determined and
134 prescribed by the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and
135 Training and the State Board of Education, within two (2) years of
136 the person's initial employment in such position. Upon the
137 failure of any person employed in such position to receive the
138 required training within the designated time, the person may not
139 exercise the powers of a peace officer in or on the property of
140 the school district. Additionally, such persons employed in the
141 capacity as a school resource officer shall be provided Mental
142 Health First Aid training by the employing school district or
143 local law enforcement agency, which is evidence-based and approved
144 by the Department of Mental Health, as a component of their
145 initial minimum level of law enforcement training requirements and



any required continuing education or certification training during
the time of continued employment by the school district or with
the local law enforcement agency.

(3) The school board is authorized and empowered, in its discretion, and subject to the approval of the Federal Communications Commission, to install and operate a noncommercial radio broadcasting and transmission station for educational and vocational educational purposes.

(4) If a law enforcement officer is duly appointed to be a peace officer by a school district under this section, the local school board may enter into an interlocal agreement with other law enforcement entities for the provision of equipment or traffic control duties, however, the duty to enforce traffic regulations and to enforce the laws of the state or municipality off of school property lies with the local police or sheriff's department which cannot withhold its services solely because of the lack of such an agreement.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2025.

