MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2025

By: Representative Creekmore IV

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 583

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-3-82 AND 37-7-321, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS TO REMAIN ASSIGNED TO A SPECIFIC COHORT OF STUDENTS AND FOLLOW THOSE STUDENTS AS THEY PROGRESS THROUGH GRADE LEVELS WITHIN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH GUIDELINES TO ENSURE DISTRICTS EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION; TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONS WHEN THE ABILITY OF A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER TO FOLLOW THE MATRICULATION OF A COHORT OF STUDENTS IS EXCUSED; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

37-3-82. (1) There is hereby established the Mississippi Community Oriented Policing Services in Schools (MCOPS) grant program in the State Department of Education to provide funding, pursuant to specific appropriation by the Legislature therefor, to assist law enforcement agencies in providing additional School Resource Officers to engage in community policing in and around primary and secondary schools. The MCOPS program shall authorize the State Department of Education to make grants to increase deployment of law enforcement officers in order (a) to increase or

enhance community policing in this state, (b) that trained, sworn enforcement officers assigned to schools play an integral part in the development and/or enhancement of a comprehensive school safety plan, and (c) that the presence of these officers shall provide schools with a direct link to local law enforcement agencies.

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

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

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

(c) Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, the MCOPS in Schools program shall provide a minimum state contribution of up to Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00) per officer position over the one-year grant period, to be matched from local funds on a 50/50 matching basis. Officers paid with MCOPS funds may be employed by the local law enforcement agency or by the local school district. MCOPS funds may be used to pay for entry-level

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

(d) School Resource Officers (SROs) may serve in a variety of roles, including, but not limited to, that of a law

enforcement officer/safety specialist, law-related educator, and problem-solver/community liaison. These officers may teach programs such as crime prevention, substance abuse prevention, and gang resistance as well as monitor and assist troubled students through mentoring programs. The School Resource Officer(s) may also identify physical changes in the environment that may reduce crime in and around the schools, as well as assist in developing school policies which address criminal activity and school safety. The application must also include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by the law enforcement executive and the appropriate school official(s), to document the roles and responsibilities to be undertaken by the law enforcement agency and the educational school partner(s) through this collaborative effort. The application must also include a Narrative Addendum to document that the School Resource Officer(s) will be assigned to work in and around primary or secondary schools and provide supporting documentation in the following areas: problem identification and justification, community policing strategies to be used by the officers, quality and level of commitment to the effort, and the link to community policing.

(e) All agencies receiving awards through the MCOPS in Schools program are required to send the School Resource Officer position(s) funded by this grant, to the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers' Training Academy where they shall be required to participate in training through the Advanced Law

Enforcement Rapid Response Training Program at the academy, with 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.

(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.

(4) School resource officers assigned to schools under the authority of this section shall, to the greatest extent practicable, remain assigned to a specific cohort of students and follow those students as they progress through grade levels within the school district. This assignment shall prioritize the continuity of relationships between students and resource officers to foster trust, mentorship and school safety. The State Department of Education shall establish guidelines to ensure

districts implement this requirement effectively, considering district size and operational constraints.

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

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

(2) (a) Any person employed by a school board as a security guard or school resource officer or in any other position that has the powers of a peace officer must receive a minimum level of basic law enforcement training, as jointly determined and prescribed by the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Training and the State Board of Education, within two (2) years of the person's initial employment in such position. Upon the failure of any person employed in such position to receive the required training within the designated time, the person may not exercise the powers of a peace officer in or on the property of the school district.

(b) Each school district employing school resource officers shall assign resource officers to specific student cohorts and ensure that those officers remain with their assigned

cohort as the students matriculate from grade to grade within the district. Exceptions to this requirement may be made only for compelling reasons, such as officer reassignment, resignation or termination. The district superintendent, in consultation with school administrators, shall ensure compliance and provide an annual report to the school board on the implementation of this provision.

(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.