

By: Representatives Creekmore IV, Felsher

To: Education

## HOUSE BILL NO. 591

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS TO PROVIDE MENTAL  
2 HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING THAT IS EVIDENCE BASED AND APPROVED BY  
3 THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH TO ALL LICENSED AND NONLICENSED  
4 INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL AND TO LICENSED ADMINISTRATORS BEFORE THE  
5 BEGINNING OF THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR; TO REQUIRE SCHOOL BOARDS  
6 TO DEVELOP AND ADOPT A POLICY RELATING TO FREQUENCY OF THE  
7 REQUIRED TRAINING; TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH TO  
8 PROVIDE PARTICIPANTS WITH A CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION, WHICH MAY  
9 BE USED TO SATISFY THE TRAINING REQUIREMENT; TO BRING FORWARD  
10 SECTIONS 37-7-301 AND 37-7-343, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, FOR  
11 PURPOSES OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS; TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-3-82 AND  
12 37-7-321, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE LOCAL SCHOOL  
13 DISTRICTS AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES THAT EMPLOY  
14 INDIVIDUALS TO SERVE AS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS TO PROVIDE MENTAL  
15 HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING THAT IS EVIDENCED-BASED AND APPROVED BY  
16 THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

18 **SECTION 1.** Each local school board, acting under the  
19 authority of Sections 37-7-301(w) and 37-7-343 to enter into  
20 contracts or agreements with persons or entities, public or  
21 private, to provide training or professional development  
22 activities, or both, for employees of the district, shall provide  
23 mental health first aid training that is evidence-based and  
24 approved by the Department of Mental Health to all licensed and  
25 nonlicensed instructional personnel and licensed administrator



employed by the school district before the beginning of the 2025-2026 academic school year. Additionally, each school board shall develop and adopt a policy to determine the frequency at which such personnel shall undergo the training required under this section, which may be used as satisfactory component for professional development or continuing education. The Department of Mental Health shall provide participants, who complete the training, with a certificate of completion, which may be used by the instructional or administrative personnel to satisfy the training requirement of the employing school district or any subsequent school district of employment, provided that the training fall within the frequency timetable of training for currentness.

**SECTION 2.** Section 37-7-301, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-7-301. The school boards of all school districts shall have the following powers, authority and duties in addition to all others imposed or granted by law, to wit:

(a) To organize and operate the schools of the district and to make such division between the high school grades and elementary grades as, in their judgment, will serve the best interests of the school;

(b) To introduce public school music, art, manual training and other special subjects into either the elementary or high school grades, as the board shall deem proper;



51 (c) To be the custodians of real and personal school  
52 property and to manage, control and care for same, both during the  
53 school term and during vacation;

54 (d) To have responsibility for the erection, repairing  
55 and equipping of school facilities and the making of necessary  
56 school improvements;

57 (e) To suspend or to expel a pupil or to change the  
58 placement of a pupil to the school district's alternative school  
59 or homebound program for misconduct in the school or on school  
60 property, as defined in Section 37-11-29, on the road to and from  
61 school, or at any school-related activity or event, or for conduct  
62 occurring on property other than school property or other than at  
63 a school-related activity or event when such conduct by a pupil,  
64 in the determination of the school superintendent or principal,  
65 renders that pupil's presence in the classroom a disruption to the  
66 educational environment of the school or a detriment to the best  
67 interest and welfare of the pupils and teacher of such class as a  
68 whole, and to delegate such authority to the appropriate officials  
69 of the school district;

70 (f) To visit schools in the district, in their  
71 discretion, in a body for the purpose of determining what can be  
72 done for the improvement of the school in a general way;

73 (g) To support, within reasonable limits, the  
74 superintendent, principal and teachers where necessary for the  
75 proper discipline of the school;



76 (h) To exclude from the schools students with what  
77 appears to be infectious or contagious diseases; provided,  
78 however, such student may be allowed to return to school upon  
79 presenting a certificate from a public health officer, duly  
80 licensed physician or nurse practitioner that the student is free  
81 from such disease;

82 (i) To require those vaccinations specified by the  
83 State Health Officer as provided in Section 41-23-37;

84 (j) To see that all necessary utilities and services  
85 are provided in the schools at all times when same are needed;

86 (k) To authorize the use of the school buildings and  
87 grounds for the holding of public meetings and gatherings of the  
88 people under such regulations as may be prescribed by said board;

89 (l) To prescribe and enforce rules and regulations not  
90 inconsistent with law or with the regulations of the State Board  
91 of Education for their own government and for the government of  
92 the schools, and to transact their business at regular and special  
93 meetings called and held in the manner provided by law;

94 (m) To maintain and operate all of the schools under  
95 their control for such length of time during the year as may be  
96 required;

97 (n) To enforce in the schools the courses of study and  
98 the use of the textbooks prescribed by the proper authorities;

99 (o) To make orders directed to the superintendent of  
100 schools for the issuance of pay certificates for lawful purposes



on any available funds of the district and to have full control of the receipt, distribution, allotment and disbursement of all funds provided for the support and operation of the schools of such school district whether such funds be derived from state appropriations, local ad valorem tax collections, or otherwise. The local school board shall be authorized and empowered to promulgate rules and regulations that specify the types of claims and set limits of the dollar amount for payment of claims by the superintendent of schools to be ratified by the board at the next regularly scheduled meeting after payment has been made;

(p) To select all school district personnel in the manner provided by law, and to provide for such employee fringe benefit programs, including accident reimbursement plans, as may be deemed necessary and appropriate by the board;

(q) To provide athletic programs and other school activities and to regulate the establishment and operation of such programs and activities;

(r) To join, in their discretion, any association of school boards and other public school-related organizations, and to pay from local funds other than total funding formula funds, any membership dues;

(s) To expend local school activity funds, or other available school district funds, other than total funding formula funds, for the purposes prescribed under this paragraph.

"Activity funds" shall mean all funds received by school officials



126 in all school districts paid or collected to participate in any  
127 school activity, such activity being part of the school program  
128 and partially financed with public funds or supplemented by public  
129 funds. The term "activity funds" shall not include any funds  
130 raised and/or expended by any organization unless commingled in a  
131 bank account with existing activity funds, regardless of whether  
132 the funds were raised by school employees or received by school  
133 employees during school hours or using school facilities, and  
134 regardless of whether a school employee exercises influence over  
135 the expenditure or disposition of such funds. Organizations shall  
136 not be required to make any payment to any school for the use of  
137 any school facility if, in the discretion of the local school  
138 governing board, the organization's function shall be deemed to be  
139 beneficial to the official or extracurricular programs of the  
140 school. For the purposes of this provision, the term  
141 "organization" shall not include any organization subject to the  
142 control of the local school governing board. Activity funds may  
143 only be expended for any necessary expenses or travel costs,  
144 including advances, incurred by students and their chaperons in  
145 attending any in-state or out-of-state school-related programs,  
146 conventions or seminars and/or any commodities, equipment, travel  
147 expenses, purchased services or school supplies which the local  
148 school governing board, in its discretion, shall deem beneficial  
149 to the official or extracurricular programs of the district,  
150 including items which may subsequently become the personal



property of individuals, including yearbooks, athletic apparel,  
book covers and trophies. Activity funds may be used to pay  
travel expenses of school district personnel. The local school  
governing board shall be authorized and empowered to promulgate  
rules and regulations specifically designating for what purposes  
school activity funds may be expended. The local school governing  
board shall provide (i) that such school activity funds shall be  
maintained and expended by the principal of the school generating  
the funds in individual bank accounts, or (ii) that such school  
activity funds shall be maintained and expended by the  
superintendent of schools in a central depository approved by the  
board. The local school governing board shall provide that such  
school activity funds be audited as part of the annual audit  
required in Section 37-9-18. The State Department of Education  
shall prescribe a uniform system of accounting and financial  
reporting for all school activity fund transactions;

(t) To enter into an energy performance contract,  
energy services contract, on a shared-savings, lease or  
lease-purchase basis, for energy efficiency services and/or  
equipment as provided for in Section 31-7-14;

(u) To maintain accounts and issue pay certificates on  
school food service bank accounts;

(v) (i) To lease a school building from an individual,  
partnership, nonprofit corporation or a private for-profit  
corporation for the use of such school district, and to expend



176 funds therefor as may be available from any sources other than  
177 total funding formula funds as set by Sections 37-151-200 through  
178 37-151-215. The school board of the school district desiring to  
179 lease a school building shall declare by resolution that a need  
180 exists for a school building and that the school district cannot  
181 provide the necessary funds to pay the cost or its proportionate  
182 share of the cost of a school building required to meet the  
183 present needs. The resolution so adopted by the school board  
184 shall be published once each week for three (3) consecutive weeks  
185 in a newspaper having a general circulation in the school district  
186 involved, with the first publication thereof to be made not less  
187 than thirty (30) days prior to the date upon which the school  
188 board is to act on the question of leasing a school building. If  
189 no petition requesting an election is filed prior to such meeting  
190 as hereinafter provided, then the school board may, by resolution  
191 spread upon its minutes, proceed to lease a school building. If  
192 at any time prior to said meeting a petition signed by not less  
193 than twenty percent (20%) or fifteen hundred (1500), whichever is  
194 less, of the qualified electors of the school district involved  
195 shall be filed with the school board requesting that an election  
196 be called on the question, then the school board shall, not later  
197 than the next regular meeting, adopt a resolution calling an  
198 election to be held within such school district upon the question  
199 of authorizing the school board to lease a school building. Such  
200 election shall be called and held, and notice thereof shall be





201 given, in the same manner for elections upon the questions of the  
202 issuance of the bonds of school districts, and the results thereof  
203 shall be certified to the school board. If at least three-fifths  
204 (3/5) of the qualified electors of the school district who voted  
205 in such election shall vote in favor of the leasing of a school  
206 building, then the school board shall proceed to lease a school  
207 building. The term of the lease contract shall not exceed twenty  
208 (20) years, and the total cost of such lease shall be either the  
209 amount of the lowest and best bid accepted by the school board  
210 after advertisement for bids or an amount not to exceed the  
211 current fair market value of the lease as determined by the  
212 averaging of at least two (2) appraisals by certified general  
213 appraisers licensed by the State of Mississippi. The term "school  
214 building" as used in this paragraph (v)(i) shall be construed to  
215 mean any building or buildings used for classroom purposes in  
216 connection with the operation of schools and shall include the  
217 site therefor, necessary support facilities, and the equipment  
218 thereof and appurtenances thereto such as heating facilities,  
219 water supply, sewage disposal, landscaping, walks, drives and  
220 playgrounds. The term "lease" as used in this paragraph (v)(i)  
221 may include a lease-purchase contract;

222 (ii) If two (2) or more school districts propose  
223 to enter into a lease contract jointly, then joint meetings of the  
224 school boards having control may be held but no action taken shall  
225 be binding on any such school district unless the question of



226 leasing a school building is approved in each participating school  
227 district under the procedure hereinabove set forth in paragraph  
228 (v)(i). All of the provisions of paragraph (v)(i) regarding the  
229 term and amount of the lease contract shall apply to the school  
230 boards of school districts acting jointly. Any lease contract  
231 executed by two (2) or more school districts as joint lessees  
232 shall set out the amount of the aggregate lease rental to be paid  
233 by each, which may be agreed upon, but there shall be no right of  
234 occupancy by any lessee unless the aggregate rental is paid as  
235 stipulated in the lease contract. All rights of joint lessees  
236 under the lease contract shall be in proportion to the amount of  
237 lease rental paid by each;

238 (w) To employ all noninstructional and noncertificated  
239 employees and fix the duties and compensation of such personnel  
240 deemed necessary pursuant to the recommendation of the  
241 superintendent of schools;

242 (x) To employ and fix the duties and compensation of  
243 such legal counsel as deemed necessary;

244 (y) Subject to rules and regulations of the State Board  
245 of Education, to purchase, own and operate trucks, vans and other  
246 motor vehicles, which shall bear the proper identification  
247 required by law;

248 (z) To expend funds for the payment of substitute  
249 teachers and to adopt reasonable regulations for the employment  
250 and compensation of such substitute teachers;



251           (aa) To acquire in its own name by purchase all real  
252 property which shall be necessary and desirable in connection with  
253 the construction, renovation or improvement of any public school  
254 building or structure. Whenever the purchase price for such real  
255 property is greater than Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00), the  
256 school board shall not purchase the property for an amount  
257 exceeding the fair market value of such property as determined by  
258 the average of at least two (2) independent appraisals by  
259 certified general appraisers licensed by the State of Mississippi.  
260 If the board shall be unable to agree with the owner of any such  
261 real property in connection with any such project, the board shall  
262 have the power and authority to acquire any such real property by  
263 condemnation proceedings pursuant to Section 11-27-1 et seq.,  
264 Mississippi Code of 1972, and for such purpose, the right of  
265 eminent domain is hereby conferred upon and vested in said board.  
266 Provided further, that the local school board is authorized to  
267 grant an easement for ingress and egress over sixteenth section  
268 land or lieu land in exchange for a similar easement upon  
269 adjoining land where the exchange of easements affords substantial  
270 benefit to the sixteenth section land; provided, however, the  
271 exchange must be based upon values as determined by a competent  
272 appraiser, with any differential in value to be adjusted by cash  
273 payment. Any easement rights granted over sixteenth section land  
274 under such authority shall terminate when the easement ceases to  
275 be used for its stated purpose. No sixteenth section or lieu land



which is subject to an existing lease shall be burdened by any such easement except by consent of the lessee or unless the school district shall acquire the unexpired leasehold interest affected by the easement;

(bb) To charge reasonable fees related to the educational programs of the district, in the manner prescribed in Section 37-7-335;

(cc) Subject to rules and regulations of the State Board of Education, to purchase relocatable classrooms for the use of such school district, in the manner prescribed in Section 37-1-13;

(dd) Enter into contracts or agreements with other school districts, political subdivisions or governmental entities to carry out one or more of the powers or duties of the school board, or to allow more efficient utilization of limited resources for providing services to the public;

(ee) To provide for in-service training for employees of the district;

(ff) As part of their duties to prescribe the use of textbooks, to provide that parents and legal guardians shall be responsible for the textbooks and for the compensation to the school district for any books which are not returned to the proper schools upon the withdrawal of their dependent child. If a textbook is lost or not returned by any student who drops out of the public school district, the parent or legal guardian shall



301 also compensate the school district for the fair market value of  
302 the textbooks;

303 (gg) To conduct fund-raising activities on behalf of  
304 the school district that the local school board, in its  
305 discretion, deems appropriate or beneficial to the official or  
306 extracurricular programs of the district; provided that:

307 (i) Any proceeds of the fund-raising activities  
308 shall be treated as "activity funds" and shall be accounted for as  
309 are other activity funds under this section; and

310 (ii) Fund-raising activities conducted or  
311 authorized by the board for the sale of school pictures, the  
312 rental of caps and gowns or the sale of graduation invitations for  
313 which the school board receives a commission, rebate or fee shall  
314 contain a disclosure statement advising that a portion of the  
315 proceeds of the sales or rentals shall be contributed to the  
316 student activity fund;

317 (hh) To allow individual lessons for music, art and  
318 other curriculum-related activities for academic credit or  
319 nonacademic credit during school hours and using school equipment  
320 and facilities, subject to uniform rules and regulations adopted  
321 by the school board;

322 (ii) To charge reasonable fees for participating in an  
323 extracurricular activity for academic or nonacademic credit for  
324 necessary and required equipment such as safety equipment, band  
325 instruments and uniforms;



(jj) To conduct or participate in any fund-raising activities on behalf of or in connection with a tax-exempt charitable organization;

(kk) To exercise such powers as may be reasonably necessary to carry out the provisions of this section;

(ll) To expend funds for the services of nonprofit arts organizations or other such nonprofit organizations who provide performances or other services for the students of the school district;

(mm) To expend federal No Child Left Behind Act funds, or any other available funds that are expressly designated and authorized for that use, to pay training, educational expenses, salary incentives and salary supplements to employees of local school districts; except that incentives shall not be considered part of the local supplement, nor shall incentives be considered part of the local supplement paid to an individual teacher for the purposes of Section 37-19-7(1);

(nn) To use any available funds, not appropriated or designated for any other purpose, for reimbursement to the state-licensed employees from both in state and out of state, who enter into a contract for employment in a school district, for the expense of moving when the employment necessitates the relocation of the licensed employee to a different geographical area than that in which the licensed employee resides before entering into the contract. The reimbursement shall not exceed One Thousand



Dollars (\$1,000.00) for the documented actual expenses incurred in the course of relocating, including the expense of any professional moving company or persons employed to assist with the move, rented moving vehicles or equipment, mileage in the amount authorized for county and municipal employees under Section 25-3-41 if the licensed employee used his personal vehicle or vehicles for the move, meals and such other expenses associated with the relocation. No licensed employee may be reimbursed for moving expenses under this section on more than one (1) occasion by the same school district. Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the actual residence to which the licensed employee relocates to be within the boundaries of the school district that has executed a contract for employment in order for the licensed employee to be eligible for reimbursement for the moving expenses. However, the licensed employee must relocate within the boundaries of the State of Mississippi. Any individual receiving relocation assistance through the Critical Teacher Shortage Act as provided in Section 37-159-5 shall not be eligible to receive additional relocation funds as authorized in this paragraph;

(oo) To use any available funds, not appropriated or designated for any other purpose, to reimburse persons who interview for employment as a licensed employee with the district for the mileage and other actual expenses incurred in the course



of travel to and from the interview at the rate authorized for county and municipal employees under Section 25-3-41;

(pp) Consistent with the report of the Task Force to Conduct a Best Financial Management Practices Review, to improve school district management and use of resources and identify cost savings as established in Section 8 of Chapter 610, Laws of 2002, local school boards are encouraged to conduct independent reviews of the management and efficiency of schools and school districts. Such management and efficiency reviews shall provide state and local officials and the public with the following:

(i) An assessment of a school district's governance and organizational structure;

(ii) An assessment of the school district's financial and personnel management;

(iii) An assessment of revenue levels and sources;

(iv) An assessment of facilities utilization, planning and maintenance;

(v) An assessment of food services, transportation and safety/security systems;

(vi) An assessment of instructional and administrative technology;

(vii) A review of the instructional management and the efficiency and effectiveness of existing instructional programs; and





399 (viii) Recommended methods for increasing  
400 efficiency and effectiveness in providing educational services to  
401 the public;

402 (qq) To enter into agreements with other local school  
403 boards for the establishment of an educational service agency  
404 (ESA) to provide for the cooperative needs of the region in which  
405 the school district is located, as provided in Section 37-7-345;

406 (rr) To implement a financial literacy program for  
407 students in Grades 10 and 11. The board may review the national  
408 programs and obtain free literature from various nationally  
409 recognized programs. After review of the different programs, the  
410 board may certify a program that is most appropriate for the  
411 school districts' needs. If a district implements a financial  
412 literacy program, then any student in Grade 10 or 11 may  
413 participate in the program. The financial literacy program shall  
414 include, but is not limited to, instruction in the same areas of  
415 personal business and finance as required under Section  
416 37-1-3(2) (b). The school board may coordinate with volunteer  
417 teachers from local community organizations, including, but not  
418 limited to, the following: United States Department of  
419 Agriculture Rural Development, United States Department of Housing  
420 and Urban Development, Junior Achievement, bankers and other  
421 nonprofit organizations. Nothing in this paragraph shall be  
422 construed as to require school boards to implement a financial  
423 literacy program;



424           (ss) To collaborate with the State Board of Education,  
425 Community Action Agencies or the Department of Human Services to  
426 develop and implement a voluntary program to provide services for  
427 a prekindergarten program that addresses the cognitive, social,  
428 and emotional needs of four-year-old and three-year-old children.  
429 The school board may utilize any source of available revenue to  
430 fund the voluntary program. Effective with the 2013-2014 school  
431 year, to implement voluntary prekindergarten programs under the  
432 Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013 pursuant to state funds  
433 awarded by the State Department of Education on a matching basis;

434           (tt) With respect to any lawful, written obligation of  
435 a school district, including, but not limited to, leases  
436 (excluding leases of sixteenth section public school trust land),  
437 bonds, notes, or other agreement, to agree in writing with the  
438 obligee that the Department of Revenue or any state agency,  
439 department or commission created under state law may:

440           (i) Withhold all or any part (as agreed by the  
441 school board) of any monies which such local school board is  
442 entitled to receive from time to time under any law and which is  
443 in the possession of the Department of Revenue, or any state  
444 agency, department or commission created under state law; and

445           (ii) Pay the same over to any financial  
446 institution, trustee or other obligee, as directed in writing by  
447 the school board, to satisfy all or part of such obligation of the  
448 school district.



449       The school board may make such written agreement to withhold  
450 and transfer funds irrevocable for the term of the written  
451 obligation and may include in the written agreement any other  
452 terms and provisions acceptable to the school board. If the  
453 school board files a copy of such written agreement with the  
454 Department of Revenue, or any state agency, department or  
455 commission created under state law then the Department of Revenue  
456 or any state agency, department or commission created under state  
457 law shall immediately make the withholdings provided in such  
458 agreement from the amounts due the local school board and shall  
459 continue to pay the same over to such financial institution,  
460 trustee or obligee for the term of the agreement.

461       This paragraph (tt) shall not grant any extra authority to a  
462 school board to issue debt in any amount exceeding statutory  
463 limitations on assessed value of taxable property within such  
464 school district or the statutory limitations on debt maturities,  
465 and shall not grant any extra authority to impose, levy or collect  
466 a tax which is not otherwise expressly provided for, and shall not  
467 be construed to apply to sixteenth section public school trust  
468 land;

469       (uu) With respect to any matter or transaction that is  
470 competitively bid by a school district, to accept from any bidder  
471 as a good-faith deposit or bid bond or bid surety, the same type  
472 of good-faith deposit or bid bond or bid surety that may be  
473 accepted by the state or any other political subdivision on



474 similar competitively bid matters or transactions. This paragraph  
475 (uu) shall not be construed to apply to sixteenth section public  
476 school trust land. The school board may authorize the investment  
477 of any school district funds in the same kind and manner of  
478 investments, including pooled investments, as any other political  
479 subdivision, including community hospitals;

480 (vv) To utilize the alternate method for the conveyance  
481 or exchange of unused school buildings and/or land, reserving a  
482 partial or other undivided interest in the property, as  
483 specifically authorized and provided in Section 37-7-485;

484 (ww) To delegate, privatize or otherwise enter into a  
485 contract with private entities for the operation of any and all  
486 functions of nonacademic school process, procedures and operations  
487 including, but not limited to, cafeteria workers, janitorial  
488 services, transportation, professional development, achievement  
489 and instructional consulting services materials and products,  
490 purchasing cooperatives, insurance, business manager services,  
491 auditing and accounting services, school safety/risk prevention,  
492 data processing and student records, and other staff services;  
493 however, the authority under this paragraph does not apply to the  
494 leasing, management or operation of sixteenth section lands.  
495 Local school districts, working through their regional education  
496 service agency, are encouraged to enter into buying consortia with  
497 other member districts for the purposes of more efficient use of  
498 state resources as described in Section 37-7-345;



499           (xx) To partner with entities, organizations and  
500 corporations for the purpose of benefiting the school district;  
501           (yy) To borrow funds from the Rural Economic  
502 Development Authority for the maintenance of school buildings;  
503           (zz) To fund and operate voluntary early childhood  
504 education programs, defined as programs for children less than  
505 five (5) years of age on or before September 1, and to use any  
506 source of revenue for such early childhood education programs.  
507 Such programs shall not conflict with the Early Learning  
508 Collaborative Act of 2013;  
509           (aaa) To issue and provide for the use of procurement  
510 cards by school board members, superintendents and licensed school  
511 personnel consistent with the rules and regulations of the  
512 Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration under Section  
513 31-7-9; and  
514           (bbb) To conduct an annual comprehensive evaluation of  
515 the superintendent of schools consistent with the assessment  
516 components of paragraph (pp) of this section and the assessment  
517 benchmarks established by the Mississippi School Board Association  
518 to evaluate the success the superintendent has attained in meeting  
519 district goals and objectives, the superintendent's leadership  
520 skill and whether or not the superintendent has established  
521 appropriate standards for performance, is monitoring success and  
522 is using data for improvement.



**SECTION 3.** Section 37-7-343, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-7-343. The school board of a local school district may enter into contracts or agreements with persons or entities, public or private, to provide training or professional development activities, or both, for employees of the district.

**SECTION 4.** 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:



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

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

558 (c) Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, the MCOPS  
559 in Schools program shall provide a minimum state contribution of  
560 up to Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00) per officer position over  
561 the one-year grant period, to be matched from local funds on a  
562 50/50 matching basis. Officers paid with MCOPS funds may be  
563 employed by the local law enforcement agency or by the local  
564 school district. MCOPS funds may be used to pay for entry-level  
565 salaries and benefits of newly trained additional School Resource  
566 Officers and may be used to pay the salaries and benefits of  
567 School Resource Officers employed prior to July 1, 2013. All  
568 jurisdictions that apply must demonstrate that they have primary  
569 law enforcement authority over the school(s) identified in their  
570 application and demonstrate their inability to implement this  
571 project without state assistance. Schools or law enforcement  
572 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.





598 The application must also include a Memorandum of Understanding  
599 (MOU), signed by the law enforcement executive and the appropriate  
600 school official(s), to document the roles and responsibilities to  
601 be undertaken by the law enforcement agency and the educational  
602 school partner(s) through this collaborative effort. The  
603 application must also include a Narrative Addendum to document  
604 that the School Resource Officer(s) will be assigned to work in  
605 and around primary or secondary schools and provide supporting  
606 documentation in the following areas: problem identification and  
607 justification, community policing strategies to be used by the  
608 officers, quality and level of commitment to the effort, and the  
609 link to community policing.

610 (e) All agencies receiving awards through the MCOPS in  
611 Schools program are required to send the School Resource Officer  
612 position(s) funded by this grant, to the Mississippi Law  
613 Enforcement Officers' Training Academy where they shall be  
614 required to participate in training through the Advanced Law  
615 Enforcement Rapid Response Training Program at the academy, with  
616 the cost to be defrayed from the MCOPS program. The MCOPS Office  
617 of the State Department of Education will reimburse grantees for  
618 training, per diem, travel, and lodging costs for attendance of  
619 required participants up to a maximum of One Thousand Two Hundred  
620 Dollars (\$1,200.00) per person attending. Applicants receiving an  
621 MCOPS in Schools grant, will receive additional training  
622 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.

**SECTION 5.** 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



648 school purposes by such board upon their taking such oath and  
649 making such bond as required of a constable of the county in which  
650 the school district is situated.

651 (2) Any person employed by a school board as a security  
652 guard or school resource officer or in any other position that has  
653 the powers of a peace officer must receive a minimum level of  
654 basic law enforcement training, as jointly determined and  
655 prescribed by the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and  
656 Training and the State Board of Education, within two (2) years of  
657 the person's initial employment in such position. Upon the  
658 failure of any person employed in such position to receive the  
659 required training within the designated time, the person may not  
660 exercise the powers of a peace officer in or on the property of  
661 the school district. Additionally, such persons employed in the  
662 capacity as a school resource officer shall be provided Mental  
663 Health First Aid training by the employing school district or  
664 local law enforcement agency, which is evidence-based and approved  
665 by the Department of Mental Health, as a component of their  
666 initial minimum level of law enforcement training requirements and  
667 any required continuing education or certification training during  
668 the time of continued employment by the school district or with  
669 the local law enforcement agency.

670 (3) The school board is authorized and empowered, in its  
671 discretion, and subject to the approval of the Federal  
672 Communications Commission, to install and operate a noncommercial



673 radio broadcasting and transmission station for educational and  
674 vocational educational purposes.

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

684 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
685 and after July 1, 2025.

