

By: Representative Roberson

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 878

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE; TO
2 PROVIDE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE TASK FORCE; TO
3 PROVIDE THAT THE TASK FORCE WILL CONTINUALLY STUDY ENSURING AND
4 ENHANCING SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND
5 STAFF IN MISSISSIPPI, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICES FOR
6 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE TASK FORCE TO CONDUCT
7 ITS BUSINESS; TO REQUIRE THAT THE TASK FORCE WILL REPORT ITS
8 FINDINGS AND ANY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE ON AN ANNUAL
9 BASIS; TO BRING FORWARD SECTION 37-3-83, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,
10 FOR THE PURPOSE OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

12 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is created the Mississippi School
13 Safety Task Force for the purpose of the continual study of
14 ensuring and enhancing safe school environments for students,
15 teachers and staff in Mississippi, and the implementation of best
16 practices for prevention and response.

17 (2) The task force shall be composed of the following
18 twenty-five (25) members:

19 (a) The Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of
20 Public Safety, who shall serve as the Chairman;

21 (b) The Chairmen of the Education Committees of the
22 House of Representatives and Senate;



23 (c) The Chairmen of the Judiciary A Committees of the
24 House of Representatives and Senate;

25 (d) The State Superintendent of Public Education;

26 (e) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Emergency
27 Management Agency;

28 (f) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
29 Department of Mental Health;

30 (g) The Director of the Mississippi Office of Homeland
31 Security;

32 (h) The Director of the Mississippi Bureau of
33 Narcotics;

34 (i) The Director of the Mississippi Highway Patrol
35 (Assistant Commissioner of the Mississippi Department of Public
36 Safety);

37 (j) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Wireless
38 Communication Commission;

39 (k) The Director of the Office of Safe and Orderly
40 Schools within the State Department of Education;

41 (l) A representative from the Office of the Governor;

42 (m) The Attorney General;

43 (n) Four (4) law enforcement officers, one (1) selected
44 from each Congressional district, and two (2) of whom shall be a
45 county sheriff, and two (2) of whom shall be a municipal police
46 chief, who shall be appointed by the Commissioner;

47 (o) A school superintendent, appointed by the Governor,



48 from the state-at-large;

49 (p) A representative of the Mississippi School Board
50 Association;

51 (q) A school resource officer, appointed by the
52 Governor, from the state-at-large;

53 (r) A student representative, appointed by the State
54 Superintendent of Public Education, from the state-at-large;

55 (s) A parent representative, appointed by the State
56 Superintendent of Public Education, from the state-at-large; and

57 (t) A representative of the Mississippi Association of
58 School Superintendents.

59 (3) The members of the task force shall be appointed within
60 thirty (30) days of the effective date of this act. Any vacancy
61 in the task force shall not affect its powers, but shall be filled
62 as prescribed in subsection (1) of this section. The task force
63 shall hold its first meeting within sixty (60) days of the
64 effective date of this act, on a call of the commissioner, as
65 chairman of the task force. A majority of the membership of the
66 task force shall constitute a quorum, and shall meet at the call
67 of the chairman. All members must be notified in writing of all
68 meetings at least five (5) days before the date on which a meeting
69 of the task force is scheduled.

70 (4) Members of the task force shall receive a per diem in
71 the amount provided in Section 25-3-69 for each day engaged in the
72 business of the task force. Members of the task force, other than



the legislative members, shall receive reimbursement for travel expenses incurred while engaged in official business of the task force in accordance with Section 25-3-41 and the legislative members of the task force shall receive the expense allowance provided for in Section 5-1-47.

(5) The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature annually not later than December 1 each year.

SECTION 2. Section 37-3-83, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-3-83. (1) There is established within the State Department of Education, using only existing staff and resources, a School Safety Grant Program, available to all eligible public school districts, to assist in financing programs to provide school safety. However, no monies from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grant may be used for the School Safety Grant Program.

(2) The school board of each school district, with the assistance of the State Department of Education School Safety Center, shall adopt a comprehensive local school district school safety plan and shall update the plan on an annual basis.

(3) Subject to the extent of appropriations available, the School Safety Grant Program shall offer any of the following specific preventive services, and other additional services



appropriate to the most current school district school safety plan:

(a) Metal detectors;

(b) Video surveillance cameras, communications equipment and monitoring equipment for classrooms, school buildings, school grounds and school buses;

(c) Crisis management/action teams responding to school violence;

(d) Violence prevention training, conflict resolution training, behavioral stress training and other appropriate training designated by the State Department of Education for faculty and staff; and

(e) School safety personnel.

(4) Each local school district of this state may annually apply for school safety grant funds subject to appropriations by the Legislature. School safety grants shall include a base grant amount plus an additional amount per student in net enrollment in the school or school district. The base grant amount and amount per student shall be determined by the State Board of Education, subject to specific appropriation therefor by the Legislature. 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, and shall be required to establish a local School Safety Task Force to involve members of



the community in the school safety effort. The State Department of Education shall determine by July 1 of each succeeding year which local school districts have submitted approved applications for school safety grants.

(5) As part of the School Safety Grant Program, the State Department of Education may conduct a pilot program to research the feasibility of using video camera equipment in the classroom to address the following:

(a) Determine if video cameras in the classroom reduce student disciplinary problems;

(b) Enable teachers to present clear and convincing evidence of a student's disruptive behavior to the student, the principal, the superintendent and the student's parents; and

(c) Enable teachers to review teaching performance and receive diagnostic feedback for developmental purposes.

(6) Any local school district may use audio/visual-monitoring equipment in classrooms, hallways, buildings, grounds and buses for the purpose of monitoring school disciplinary problems.

(7) As a component of the comprehensive local school district school safety plan required under subsection (2) of this section, the school board of a school district may adopt and implement a policy addressing sexual abuse of children, to be known as "Erin's Law Awareness." Any policy adopted under this



subsection may include or address, but need not be limited to, the following:

(a) Methods for increasing teacher, student and parental awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse of children, including knowledge of likely warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse;

(b) Educational information for parents or guardians, which may be included in the school handbook, on the warning signs of a child being abused, along with any needed assistance, referral or resource information;

(c) Training for school personnel on child sexual abuse;

(d) Age-appropriate curriculum for students in prekindergarten through fifth grade;

(e) Actions that a child who is a victim of sexual abuse should take to obtain assistance and intervention;

(f) Counseling and resources available for students affected by sexual abuse; and

(g) Emotional and educational support for a child who has been abused to enable the child to be successful in school.

(8) As part of the school safety grant program, the State Department of Education shall establish three (3) pilot programs in six (6) school districts utilizing an evidence-based curriculum to provide students in Grades K-5 with skills to manage stress and anxiety in order for them to be better equipped to handle



171 challenges in a healthy way and build resiliency. The Mississippi
172 Department of Mental Health shall be responsible for the selection
173 of the content of the evidence-based curriculum. The results of
174 this pilot program shall be measured and reported, and such
175 results shall be used in consideration of the implementation of
176 this curriculum statewide.

177 (9) As a component of the comprehensive local school
178 district safety plan required under subsection (2) of this
179 section, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the State
180 Department of Education shall require local school districts to
181 conduct, every two (2) years, refresher training on mental health
182 and suicide prevention for all school employees and personnel,
183 including all cafeteria workers, custodians, teachers and
184 administrators. The Mississippi Department of Mental Health shall
185 be responsible for the development and/or selection of the content
186 of the training, which training shall be provided at no cost to
187 school employees. School districts shall report completion of the
188 training to the State Department of Education.

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

