

By: Representative Roberson

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 1622

1 AN ACT TO BRING FORWARD SECTION 37-161-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF
2 1972, WHICH CREATES THE MISSISSIPPI VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM,
3 FOR THE PURPOSE OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

5 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-161-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
6 brought forward as follows:

7 37-161-3. (1) The Legislature finds and declares the
8 following:

9 (a) Meeting the educational needs of children in our
10 state's schools is of the greatest importance to the future
11 welfare of the State of Mississippi;

12 (b) Closing the achievement gap between high-performing
13 students, including the achievement gap among at-risk students, is
14 a significant and present challenge;

15 (c) Providing a broader range of educational options to
16 parents and utilizing existing resources, along with technology,
17 may help students in the state improve their academic achievement;
18 and



19 (d) Many of the state's school districts currently lack
20 the capacity to provide other public school choices for students
21 whose schools are low performing.

22 (2) There is created the Mississippi Virtual Public School
23 Program, which is the responsibility of the State Department of
24 Education. It is the intent of the Legislature that the
25 Mississippi Virtual Public School established under this section
26 provides Mississippi families with an alternative choice to access
27 additional educational resources in an effort to improve academic
28 achievement. The Mississippi Virtual Public School must be
29 recognized as a public school and provide equitable treatment and
30 resources as are other public schools in the state. Private
31 providers, overseen by the State Department of Education, may be
32 selected by the State Board of Education to administer, manage or
33 operate virtual school programs in this state, including the total
34 operation of the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program. Any
35 private provider chosen to provide services under the provisions
36 of this subsection shall be chosen through the Mississippi Online
37 Course Application Process.

38 (3) Nothing in this section may be interpreted as precluding
39 the use of computer- and Internet-based instruction for students
40 in a virtual or remote setting utilizing the Mississippi Virtual
41 Public School.



42 (4) As used in this section, the following words and phrases
43 have the meanings respectively ascribed unless the context clearly
44 requires otherwise:

45 (a) "Mississippi Virtual Public School" means a public
46 school in which the state uses technology in order to deliver
47 instruction to students via the Internet in a virtual or remote
48 setting.

49 (b) "Sponsor" means the public school district is
50 responsible for the academic process for each student, including,
51 but not limited to, enrollment, awarding of credit and monitoring
52 progress.

53 (5) (a) The State Board of Education shall establish the
54 Mississippi Virtual Public School beginning in school year
55 2006-2007.

56 (b) Students who enroll in the Mississippi Virtual
57 Public School may reside anywhere in the State of Mississippi.

58 (6) Subject to appropriation, the Mississippi Virtual Public
59 School shall provide to each student enrolled in the school all
60 necessary instructional materials. Subject to appropriation, the
61 sponsored school must ensure that each student is provided access
62 to the necessary technology, such as a computer and printer, and
63 to an Internet connection for schoolwork purposes.

64 (7) The Mississippi Department of Education shall have
65 approval authority for all coursework and policy of the
66 Mississippi Virtual Public School.



67 (8) Each teacher employed by or participating in the
68 delivery of instruction through the Mississippi Virtual Public
69 School must meet all qualifications for licensure in the State of
70 Mississippi.

71 (9) Any student who meets state residency requirements may
72 enroll in the Mississippi Virtual Public School.

73 (10) Enrollment in the Mississippi Virtual Public School
74 shall be free of charge to students. The costs associated with
75 the operations of the virtual school must be shared by the State
76 Department of Education, subject to appropriation, and/or the
77 local school districts. Once the State Department of Education
78 appropriation and the local school district budgeted funds for
79 Mississippi Virtual Public School have been expended and students
80 choose to enroll in online courses, the costs of the online
81 courses may be the responsibility of the students' parents or
82 guardians.

83 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
84 and after July 1, 2025.

