

By: Senator(s) Parker, Boyd, Williams

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2539

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE THAT, FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR, THE
2 STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHALL IMPLEMENT A PILOT PROGRAM IN
3 12 SCHOOL DISTRICTS REQUIRING THAT SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS SERVE
4 AS MENTORS FOR STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS; TO PROVIDE THAT THREE SCHOOL
5 DISTRICTS FROM EACH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT SHALL BE SELECTED TO
6 PARTICIPATE, UNLESS FEWER THAN THREE SCHOOL DISTRICTS FROM A
7 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT APPLY; TO AMEND SECTION 37-3-82,
8 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT ALL AGENCIES RECEIVING
9 AWARDS THROUGH THE MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING
10 SERVICES IN SCHOOLS (MCOPS) GRANT PROGRAM MUST SEND THE SCHOOL
11 RESOURCE OFFICERS FUNDED BY THE GRANT TO THE MISSISSIPPI LAW
12 ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' TRAINING ACADEMY, WHERE THEY SHALL BE
13 REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN TRAINING THROUGH THE ADVANCED LAW
14 ENFORCEMENT RAPID RESPONSE TRAINING PROGRAM AT THE ACADEMY, OR TO
15 ANOTHER STATE-RECOGNIZED LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY, WHERE THEY SHALL
16 BE REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN A COMPARABLE TRAINING PROGRAM; TO
17 PROVIDE THAT, BEGINNING WITH THE 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR, THE MCOPS
18 PROGRAM SHALL PROVIDE A MINIMUM OF ONE GRANT FOR ONE SCHOOL
19 RESOURCE OFFICER TO SERVE IN EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT, REGARDLESS OF
20 WHETHER THE GRANT RECIPIENT IS A SCHOOL DISTRICT OR A LAW
21 ENFORCEMENT AGENCY, PROVIDED THAT THE APPLICANT MEETS THE
22 REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANT APPLICANTS; TO AMEND SECTION 37-7-321,
23 MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REQUIRE A SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER'S
24 TRAINING TO CONSIST OF STANDARD LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING, TOGETHER
25 WITH A SPECIFIC TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS
26 DEVELOPED BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, WHICH SHALL
27 INCLUDE INSTRUCTION ON MENTORING STUDENTS AND DEVELOPING
28 RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOL PERSONNEL, STUDENTS, PARENTS AND
29 GUARDIANS, AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

31 **SECTION 1.** For the 2025-2026 school year, the State
32 Department of Education shall implement a pilot program in twelve
33 (12) school districts requiring, as part of a school district's
34 mentorship program, that school resource officers serve as mentors
35 in schools to provide support and guidance to students in order to
36 assist in improving their academic performance and mental health
37 outcomes. Three (3) school districts from each congressional
38 district shall be selected to participate, unless fewer than three
39 (3) school districts from a congressional district apply. The
40 State Department of Education shall submit a report to the
41 Legislature no later than October 1, 2026, regarding the results
42 of the pilot program.

43 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-3-82, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
44 amended as follows:

45 37-3-82. (1) There is hereby established the Mississippi
46 Community Oriented Policing Services in Schools (MCOPS) grant
47 program in the State Department of Education to provide funding,
48 pursuant to specific appropriation by the Legislature therefor, to
49 assist law enforcement agencies in providing additional School
50 Resource Officers to engage in community policing in and around
51 primary and secondary schools. The MCOPS program shall authorize
52 the State Department of Education to make grants to increase
53 deployment of law enforcement officers in order (a) to increase or
54 enhance community policing in this state, (b) that trained, sworn
55 enforcement officers assigned to schools play an integral part in



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

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

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

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

72 (c) Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, the
73 MCOPS * * * program shall provide a minimum state contribution of
74 up to Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000.00) per officer position over
75 the one-year grant period, to be matched from local funds on a
76 50/50 matching basis. Officers paid with MCOPS funds may be
77 employed by the local law enforcement agency or by the local
78 school district. MCOPS funds may be used to pay for entry-level
79 salaries and benefits of newly trained additional School Resource
80 Officers and may be used to pay the salaries and benefits of



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

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



106 programs such as crime prevention, substance abuse prevention, and
107 gang resistance as well as monitor and assist troubled students
108 through mentoring programs. The School Resource Officer(s) may
109 also identify physical changes in the environment that may reduce
110 crime in and around the schools, as well as assist in developing
111 school policies which address criminal activity and school safety.
112 The application must also include a Memorandum of Understanding
113 (MOU), signed by the law enforcement executive and the appropriate
114 school official(s), to document the roles and responsibilities to
115 be undertaken by the law enforcement agency and the educational
116 school partner(s) through this collaborative effort. The
117 application must also include a Narrative Addendum to document
118 that the School Resource Officer(s) will be assigned to work in
119 and around primary or secondary schools and provide supporting
120 documentation in the following areas: problem identification and
121 justification, community policing strategies to be used by the
122 officers, quality and level of commitment to the effort, and the
123 link to community policing.

124 (e) All agencies receiving awards through the
125 MCOPS * * * program are required to send the School Resource
126 Officer position(s) funded by this grant, to the Mississippi Law
127 Enforcement Officers' Training Academy, where they shall be
128 required to participate in training through the Advanced Law
129 Enforcement Rapid Response Training Program at the academy, or to
130 another state-recognized law enforcement academy, where they shall



131 be required to participate in a comparable training program, with
132 the cost to be defrayed from the MCOPS program. The MCOPS Office
133 of the State Department of Education will reimburse grantees for
134 training, per diem, travel, and lodging costs for attendance of
135 required participants up to a maximum of One Thousand Two Hundred
136 Dollars (\$1,200.00) per person attending. Applicants receiving an
137 MCOPS *** grant, will receive additional training information
138 following notification of the grant award. The MCOPS ***
139 training requirement must be completed prior to the end of
140 twelve-month grant funding for officer positions.

141 (f) Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, the MCOPS
142 program shall provide a minimum of one (1) grant for one (1) SRO
143 to serve in each school district, regardless of whether the grant
144 recipient is a school district or a law enforcement agency,
145 provided that the applicant meets the requirements for applicants
146 under paragraph (c) of this subsection.

147 (3) The State Department of Education shall promulgate rules
148 and regulations prescribing procedures for the application,
149 expenditure requirements and the administration of the ***
150 MCOPS *** program established in this section, and shall make a
151 report on the implementation of the MCOPS program with any
152 recommendations to the 2020 Regular Session of the Legislature.

153 **SECTION 3.** Section 37-7-321, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
154 amended as follows:

155 37-7-321. (1) The school board of any school district
156 within the State of Mississippi, in its discretion, may employ one
157 or more persons as security personnel and may designate such
158 persons as peace officers in or on any property operated for
159 school purposes by such board upon their taking such oath and
160 making such bond as required of a constable of the county in which
161 the school district is situated.

162 (2) Any person employed by a school board as a security
163 guard or school resource officer or in any other position that has
164 the powers of a peace officer must receive a minimum level of
165 basic law enforcement training, as jointly determined and
166 prescribed by the Board on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and
167 Training and the State Board of Education, within two (2) years of
168 the person's initial employment in such position. Upon the
169 failure of any person employed in such position to receive the
170 required training within the designated time, the person may not
171 exercise the powers of a peace officer in or on the property of
172 the school district. For school resource officers, such training
173 must consist of standard law enforcement training, together with a
174 specific training curriculum for school resource officers
175 developed by the State Department of Education, which shall
176 include instruction on mentoring students and developing
177 relationships with school personnel, students, parents and
178 guardians, and the local community.



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

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

193 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
194 and after July 1, 2025.

