

By: Senator(s) Hickman

To: Education;  
Appropriations

## SENATE BILL NO. 2609

1 AN ACT TO BE KNOWN AS THE "MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL EARLY/MIDDLE  
2 COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL ACT OF 2025"; TO DECLARE THE LEGISLATIVE  
3 PURPOSES OF REGIONAL EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS IN  
4 MISSISSIPPI; TO DEFINE TERMS AND PHRASES USED IN THE ACT; TO  
5 INITIATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR REGIONAL  
6 EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS; TO ESTABLISH THAT THE LOCATION  
7 OF EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS BE ON THE CAMPUS OF  
8 POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS; TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR THE GOVERNING  
9 BOARD FOR REGIONAL EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS; TO PRESCRIBE  
10 A FUNDING STRUCTURE FOR REGIONAL EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS  
11 THAT WOULD ALLOW PER-PUPIL STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING TO TRANSFER  
12 FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO THE POST-SECONDARY  
13 INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PURPOSES OF SUPPORTING REGIONAL EARLY/MIDDLE  
14 COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS; TO PRESCRIBE STANDARDS FOR THE  
15 ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS; TO ALLOW  
16 POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS TO INITIATE AND GOVERN EARLY/MIDDLE  
17 COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL; TO ESTABLISH REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO THE  
18 ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS IN REGIONAL EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH  
19 SCHOOL RESIDING IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI AND A LOTTERY PROCESS  
20 FOR SELECTING STUDENTS WHEN CAPACITY IS INSUFFICIENT TO ENROLL ALL  
21 STUDENTS DESIRING TO ATTEND AN EARLY/MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL;  
22 TO ESTABLISH PUBLICITY EXPECTATIONS; TO DEMONSTRATE ADHERENCE TO  
23 THE STATEWIDE ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS; TO  
24 ENSURE NONDISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES; TO ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY  
25 GUIDELINES FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES; TO  
26 ENSURE THE GRANTING OF CERTAIN WAIVERS THAT MAY IMPEDE SCHOOL  
27 INNOVATIONS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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



29       **SECTION 1.** This act shall be known and may be cited as the  
30 "Mississippi Regional Early/Middle College High School Act of  
31 2025."

32       **SECTION 2.** (1) The Legislature finds and declares that the  
33 general purposes of the Early/Middle College High School and  
34 future regional early/middle college high schools in the state are  
35 as follows:

36               (a) To improve student learning by partnering with a  
37 post-secondary institution to create early/middle college  
38 opportunities for students;

39               (b) To ensure high levels of student engagement in  
40 everyday classroom instruction;

41               (c) To close achievement gaps between high-performing  
42 and low-performing students;

43               (d) To provide "power of place" for students by  
44 providing space at a post-secondary institution for use by the  
45 regional early/middle college high school;

46               (e) To provide students the opportunity to earn an  
47 associate's degree or up to two (2) years of transferable and/or  
48 career and technical college credit along with a high school  
49 diploma.

50               (f) To encourage multiple school districts within a  
51 community college service area to participate in a common regional  
52 early/middle college high school program;



(g) To encourage the use of different models of teaching, governing and scheduling to meet student needs; and

(h) To encourage replication of regional early/middle college high schools in post-secondary institutions.

(2) Early/middle college high schools are small, autonomous high schools with grades 9-12. Early/middle college high schools have been shown to create positive educational outcomes for low-income youth, first-generation college students, students of color, and other young people in higher education, while being open to all students. All regional early/middle college high schools in the state are public schools and are part of the state's public education system.

**SECTION 3.** As used in this act, the following words and phrases have the meanings ascribed in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

(a) "Regional early/middle college high school" means a public high school that exists on the campus of, or is supported by, a post-secondary institution and serves Mississippi students in grades 9-12.

(b) "Post-secondary institution" means an accredited community college or university in the State of Mississippi.

(c) "Governing board" means the board of trustees of the post-secondary institution.

**SECTION 4.** (1) The State Department of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations for the establishment,



implementation and governance of regional early/middle college high schools in Mississippi. These rules and regulations shall be consistent with nationally recognized principles and standards for quality early/middle college high schools.

(2) The Department of Education shall use the Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit to provide technical assistance with the establishment and implementation of this act, as well as the instructional quality of the programming.

**SECTION 5.** The governing board shall govern the early/middle college high school utilizing existing college policies and adopting any necessary secondary policies as required by the State Department of Education. The college president shall oversee operations of the regional early/middle college high school.

**SECTION 6.** (1) Per-pupil state funding, as well as payments for average daily attendance, shall transfer from the Department of Education to the partnering post-secondary institution for purposes of supporting early/middle college high school students in the same manner as for a traditional public school.

(2) This allocation shall not prevent the regional early/middle college high school or its partnering post-secondary institution from soliciting or receiving funds, gifts or grants from other partners, donors or providers, including, but not limited to, the full-time equivalency reimbursement funds for credit hours generated by dual credit/dual enrollment courses as



calculated and disbursed by the Mississippi Community College Board.

(3) A regional early/middle college high school may not charge tuition to students or their families for any noncareer and technical or nonworkforce training dual credit/dual enrollment course taken at the post-secondary institution; however, qualified costs of instruction not covered by the per-pupil allocation may be charged to students or their families for some career and technical or workforce training dual credit/dual enrollment courses as recommended by the governing board of the local community college.

(4) The terms of the agreement between the post-secondary institution and the partnering school districts in the geographical area supported by the post-secondary institution must include a transportation plan for students attending the regional early/middle college high school. Transportation shall not be a limiting factor for students who would attend the regional early/middle college high school. A cost agreement shall be established between the partnering post-secondary institution and the partnering school districts as allowable by state law.

**SECTION 7.** (1) The support, over the last ten (10) years, for the current pilot program located at East Mississippi Community College, the local public school districts, the community at large, and the Department of Education, shall be acknowledged in lieu of an application to establish as permanent



the Early/Middle College High School at East Mississippi Community College and any other programs already established on July 1, 2025; however, to establish future regional early/middle college high schools in the state, a post-secondary institution shall be required to make application to open a regional early/middle college high school on, or associated with, the institution.

(2) Post-secondary institutions must notify the State Department of Education of their interest in or intent to implement a regional early/middle college high school by October 1 of each year.

(3) The Department of Education must approve the establishment of regional early/middle college high schools in the State of Mississippi.

(4) As was done with the pilot program at East Mississippi Community College, the State Department of Education or its representative, the Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit, will collaborate with post-secondary institutions and local districts to develop a plan for the establishment and implementation of regional early/middle college high schools.

**SECTION 8.** (1) The regional early/middle college high school shall be open for application for all students beginning with eighth-grade students in the geographical area served by the post-secondary institution and may begin no earlier than the ninth grade the following school year. Once admitted, students shall be



released from their zoned district in order to attend the regional early/middle college high school.

(2) If capacity is insufficient to enroll all students who qualify to attend the school based on initial application, the school must select students through an open enrollment process approved by the State Department of Education.

(3) Minimum and maximum enrollment numbers are left to the discretion of the post-secondary institution.

**SECTION 9.** A school district must provide or publicize to parents and the general public information about the regional early/middle college high school as an enrollment option within the district to the same extent, and through the same means, that the district provides and publicizes information about other public schools in the district.

**SECTION 10.** All current and future regional early/middle college high schools in the state shall be subject to the student assessment and accountability requirements applicable to other public schools in Mississippi. Scores from state assessments may be transferred to the students' home high schools for accountability purposes.

**SECTION 11.** (1) A regional early/middle college high school may not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, disability, national origin or any other category that would be unlawful for any other public school.



(2) A regional early/middle college high school may not discriminate against any student on the basis of minority status or limited proficiency in English.

**SECTION 12.** If permitted by the early/middle college administration, early/middle college students may participate in extracurricular activities at their home high schools. Students of the regional early/middle college high school shall be eligible to participate in state-sponsored or district-sponsored athletic and academic interscholastic leagues, competitions, awards, scholarships and recognition programs for students, educators, administrators and schools to the same extent as other public schools.

**SECTION 13.** This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2025.

