

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;



53 (g) To encourage the use of different models of
54 teaching, governing and scheduling to meet student needs; and
55 (h) To encourage replication of regional early/middle
56 college high schools in post-secondary institutions.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

102 calculated and disbursed by the Mississippi Community College
103 Board.

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

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

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



127 the Early/Middle College High School at East Mississippi Community
128 College and any other programs already established on July 1,
129 2025; however, to establish future regional early/middle college
130 high schools in the state, a post-secondary institution shall be
131 required to make application to open a regional early/middle
132 college high school on, or associated with, the institution.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

