

By: Senator(s) Boyd

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2613

1 AN ACT TITLED THE "MISSISSIPPI PARENTAL ASSISTANCE OMBUDSMAN
2 ACT"; TO ESTABLISH THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR PARENTAL
3 ASSISTANCE WITHIN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; TO PROVIDE
4 FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THE OMBUDSMAN BY THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT
5 OF EDUCATION WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION; TO
6 PROVIDE THAT THE OMBUDSMAN SHALL REPORT TO THE STATE
7 SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION; TO ESTABLISH THE MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL
8 QUALIFICATIONS AND WORK EXPERIENCE, TOGETHER WITH KNOWLEDGE,
9 COMPETENCIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, REQUIRED FOR THE OMBUDSMAN
10 POSITION; TO PROVIDE FOR CONFIDENTIALITY OF OMBUDSMAN OFFICE
11 RECORDS, AND TO EXEMPT SUCH RECORDS FROM THE MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC
12 RECORDS ACT OF 1983; TO ALLOW THE OMBUDSMAN OFFICE TO SEEK AND
13 ACCEPT CERTAIN GRANTS, GIFTS OR OTHER FUNDS TO SUPPORT ITS
14 OPERATIONS; TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT ANY
15 RULES AND REGULATIONS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS OF
16 THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

18 **SECTION 1.** (1) This section shall be known and may be cited
19 as the "Mississippi Parental Assistance Ombudsman Act."

20 (2) As used in this section:

21 (a) "Department" means the State Department of
22 Education.

23 (b) "Ombudsman office" means the Office of the
24 Ombudsman for Parental Assistance within the department.



(3) The ombudsman office is hereby established within the department. The ombudsman shall be appointed by the State Superintendent of Education with the approval of the State Board of Education. The ombudsman shall report to the State Superintendent of Education.

(4) The ombudsman shall possess the following minimum educational qualifications and work experience:

(a) A master's degree from an accredited four-year college or university, and eight (8) years of relevant experience, including four (4) years in a line or functional administrative or advanced technical supervisory role; or

(b) A bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university, and nine (9) years of relevant experience, including four (4) years in a line or functional administrative or advanced technical supervisory role.

(5) The ombudsman shall demonstrate interpersonal skills and shall be able to communicate effectively in a variety of social and cultural contexts. In addition, the ombudsman shall have the knowledge and competencies enabling fulfillment of the following responsibilities:

(a) Communicating with educational stakeholders, and providing information to parents, teachers, administrators and citizens regarding federal and state statutes, State Board of Education policies, Mississippi Public School Accountability



Standards, and other educational policies, procedures and practices;

(b) Investigating inquiries and complaints by parents and educational stakeholders concerning the actions or decisions of schools or school districts, and composing written responses and recommendations;

(c) Mediating and facilitating communication between parents and schools to resolve disputes;

(d) Tracking and identifying systemic issues in school districts, and providing recommendations to address them;

(e) Collecting and utilizing data regarding department activities to improve services and identify areas for systemic improvement;

(f) Establishing and maintaining collaborative relationships with department program offices, school districts, nonpublic schools and other educational stakeholders;

(g) Understanding and monitoring compliance with federal and state education statutes and regulations;

(h) Planning, directing, coordinating and evaluating activities to achieve State Board of Education objectives; and

(i) Preparing and publishing an annual report to the Governor, the Legislature and the public on the ombudsman's activities, findings and recommendations.

(6) The ombudsman shall have the authority to:



(a) Access necessary records, data and personnel within schools and school districts, subject to applicable confidentiality laws;

(b) Conduct investigations and issue findings or recommendations to schools and districts; and

(c) Propose policy recommendations to the department for improving parental engagement and compliance with education laws.

(7) All communications with the ombudsman office shall be confidential unless written consent is provided by the parent or legal guardian. Records of the ombudsman office shall be exempt from the Mississippi Public Records Act of 1983. Except as otherwise required by law, the ombudsman office and its staff shall maintain the confidentiality of all records and information obtained in the course of their duties.

(8) In addition to monies appropriated by the Legislature, the ombudsman office may seek and accept grants, gifts or other funds to support its operations, provided such funds do not compromise its independence or impartiality.

(9) By December 31, 2025, the department shall adopt any rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this section.

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

