

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.

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

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

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

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

49 Standards, and other educational policies, procedures and  
50 practices;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

72 (6) The ombudsman shall have the authority to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

