

By: Senator(s) Simmons (13th), Jackson

To: Education

## SENATE BILL NO. 2620

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-9-79, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 REQUIRE EACH SCHOOL DISTRICT TO EMPLOY A LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH  
3 COUNSELOR, TOGETHER WITH SUPPORT STAFF PROPORTIONATE TO THE SIZE  
4 OF THE DISTRICT, TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL  
5 HEALTH PROGRAM FOR TRAINING ALL TEACHERS IN IDENTIFYING AND  
6 SUPPORTING STUDENTS EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES,  
7 PREVENTING HARMFUL OR DANGEROUS BEHAVIORS, AND FOSTERING A SAFE  
8 AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

10 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-9-79, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
11 amended as follows:

12 37-9-79. (1) Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the  
13 assignment of K-12 Professional School Counselors to the  
14 particular schools within the district shall be at the discretion  
15 of the local school board with the following restrictions:

16 (a) No individual shall be employed as a professional  
17 school counselor without a minimum of a Master's Degree in  
18 Guidance and Counseling, or in an emergency situation, an  
19 appropriate certification as determined by the Commission on  
20 Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure  
21 and Development; and



(b) Professional school counselors shall provide the following comprehensive counseling services:

- (i) Academic and personal/social counseling;
- (ii) Use multiple student data sources to help students make informed academic and career choices;
- (iii) Career and educational counseling;
- (iv) Individual and group counseling (large/small);
- (v) Crisis intervention and preventive counseling;
- (vi) Referrals to community agencies;
- (vii) Educational consultations and collaboration with teachers, administrators, parents and community leaders;
- (viii) Educational and career placement services;
- (ix) Follow-up counseling services;
- (x) Conflict resolution; and
- (xi) Professional school counselors must spend a minimum of eighty percent (80%) of their contractual time to the delivery of services to students as outlined by the American School Counselor Association. Delivery of services is the direct service provided to students, parents, school staff and the community which are interaction between professional school counselors and students. These direct services may include the delivery of the following:

1. School counseling core curriculum: This curriculum is designed to help students attain the desired



competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge, attitudes and skills appropriate for their developmental level. The school counseling core curriculum is delivered throughout the school's overall curriculum and may be presented by professional school counselors in collaboration with other professional educators and other resources. Collaborative efforts may be implemented to enhance the services provided.

2. Individual student planning: Professional school counselors coordinate ongoing systemic activities or individual/group sessions designed to assist students in establishing personal/social goals and developing future career plans.

3. Responsive services: Responsive services are designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns in regard to social/personal issues. Responsive services may include counseling in individual, small-group settings, or crisis responses.

4. Indirect Student Services: Indirect services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselors' interactions with others including referrals for additional assistance, consultation and collaboration with parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations.

(2) Professional school counselors shall abide by the American School Counselor Association Code of Ethics.



71           (3) The State Department of Education may adopt regulations  
72 regarding the activities of the professional school counselor as  
73 are not inconsistent with this section.

74           (4) Each school district shall employ a licensed mental  
75 health counselor, together with support staff proportionate to the  
76 size of the district to develop and implement a comprehensive  
77 mental health program for training all teachers in identifying and  
78 supporting students experiencing mental health challenges,  
79 preventing harmful or dangerous behaviors, and fostering a safe  
80 and supportive school environment.

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

