

By: Senator(s) Chassaniol, Fillingane,
Blackwell, Simmons (13th), Berry, Whaley

To: Tourism; Appropriations

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 2883

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 57-1-59, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
2 AUTHORIZE THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO
3 CONTRACTS AND OTHER AGREEMENTS WITH COUNTY BOARDS OF SUPERVISORS
4 FOR THE PURPOSE OF STAFFING MISSISSIPPI WELCOME CENTERS; TO CREATE
5 THE MISSISSIPPI WELCOME CENTERS STAFF GRANT PROGRAM TO BE
6 ADMINISTERED BY THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY; TO CREATE
7 THE MISSISSIPPI WELCOME CENTERS STAFF GRANT FUND TO BE
8 ADMINISTERED BY THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY; AND FOR
9 RELATED PURPOSES.

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

11 **SECTION 1.** Section 57-1-59, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
12 amended as follows:

13 57-1-59. The Mississippi Development Authority shall have
14 the following general powers and duties with respect to tourism:

15 (a) To promote and advertise the image of Mississippi
16 both within and without the boundaries of this state;

17 (b) To promote and advertise fairs and similar
18 activities of interest to tourists and the traveling public;

19 (c) To promote and advertise the use of wildlife and
20 natural areas by tourists and the traveling public;



21 (d) To promote and advertise the use of state
22 recreational and park facilities by tourists and the traveling
23 public;

24 (e) To promote and advertise all resources of the State
25 of Mississippi as attractions to tourists and the traveling
26 public;

27 (f) To develop for all agencies of state government the
28 necessary promotional and advertising materials needed to promote
29 all facilities and programs which may be of interest to travelers
30 and tourists;

31 (g) To maintain an educational awareness program for
32 the citizens of the state to constantly encourage increased
33 development of activities of interest to tourists and the
34 traveling public;

35 (h) To develop and maintain an information services
36 system to adequately guide tourists and the traveling public
37 within the boundaries of the state;

38 (i) To develop and maintain an extensive media program
39 to adequately inform the national and international consumer about
40 Mississippi;

41 (j) To enter into contracts and other agreements with
42 local tourism commissions or similar entities for the purpose of
43 developing regional strategies for tourism promotion. The
44 Mississippi Development Authority, in conjunction with the
45 formulation of regional strategies for tourism promotion, may



46 require that local tourism commissions or similar entities enter
47 into agreements with the authority as a condition for receiving
48 any state grants to promote tourism; * * *

49 (k) To develop programs and projects promoting the
50 state's heritage, history, culture, literature and arts, including
51 the positive recovery of the state after damages caused by natural
52 disasters, and demonstrating the state's attractiveness as a
53 tourism destination for those and other reasons * * *; and

54 (l) To enter into contracts and other agreements with
55 county boards of supervisors for the purpose of employing staff
56 members, who shall not be state service employees or members of
57 the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi, at
58 Mississippi welcome centers located within the boundaries of the
59 county with grant funds provided by the department.

60 **SECTION 2.** (1) For the purposes of this section, the
61 following words shall have the meanings ascribed herein unless the
62 context requires otherwise:

63 (a) "Grant program" means the Mississippi Welcome
64 Centers Staff Grant established in this section.

65 (b) "MDA" means the Mississippi Development Authority.

66 (2) (a) There is established the Mississippi Welcome
67 Centers Staff Grant Program, which shall be administered by the
68 MDA for the purpose of staffing welcome centers with county
69 employees as authorized under Section 57-1-59.



70 (b) Subject to the provisions of this act and any other
71 applicable state law and regulations, counties receiving a grant
72 shall have the authority to use the funds provided in this grant
73 program in a way that best facilitates their agreement to staff
74 welcome centers with county employees.

75 (3) MDA shall:

76 (a) Inform all counties with welcome centers about the
77 grant program;

78 (b) Develop regulations and procedures to govern the
79 administration of the grant program, including application
80 requirements, within two (2) months after enactment; and

81 (c) Subject to appropriation, award welcome centers
82 meeting the requirements of the program a grant for expenses
83 related to staffing the centers with certain county employees.

84 (4) An application for an award from the grant program shall
85 include:

86 (a) A detailed budget of operating expenses for the
87 welcome center, specifically as it pertains to expenses related to
88 staffing; and

89 (b) The number of employees needed to effectively staff
90 the welcome center, and the weekly hours to be worked by each
91 employee.

92 (5) Grants awarded shall be used for expenses incurred as a
93 result of staffing welcome centers with county employees,
94 including, but not limited to, compensation for county employees.



95 (6) (a) MDA shall have the authority to determine
96 reasonable compensation for any employees hired at welcome centers
97 under this section.

98 (b) The amount awarded each year shall be based on the
99 actual budget and plan submitted by the county.

100 (c) Grants received by counties under this act shall
101 only be used to offset staffing costs.

102 (7) There is created a special fund in the State Treasury,
103 to be known as the "Mississippi Welcome Centers Staff Grant Fund,"
104 from which the grants authorized by this act shall be disbursed by
105 MDA. The fund shall be maintained by the State Treasurer as a
106 separate and special fund, separate and apart from the State
107 General Fund. Unexpended amounts remaining in the fund at the end
108 of a fiscal year shall remain in the fund and shall not lapse into
109 the State General Fund. Any interest earned or investment
110 earnings or interest earned on amounts in the fund shall be
111 deposited to the credit of the fund.

112 (8) By October 1, 2025, and by October 1 of each year
113 thereafter, MDA shall provide a comprehensive report on the use of
114 monies distributed under this grant program and its effectiveness
115 on welcome center staffing.

116 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
117 and after July 1, 2025.

