

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

To: Tourism; Appropriations

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 \* \* \*;

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  
66 Authority \* \* \*.

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



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

76 (3) The \* \* \* MDA shall:

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

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

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

85 \* \* \*

86 ( \* \* \* 4) An application for an award from the grant program  
87 shall include:

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

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

94 ( \* \* \* 5) Grants awarded shall be used for expenses incurred  
95 as a result of staffing welcome centers with county employees,



96 including, but not limited to \* \* \*, compensation for county  
97 employees \* \* \*.

98 ( \* \* \*6) (a) The \* \* \* MDA shall have the authority to  
99 determine reasonable \* \* \* compensation for any employees hired at  
100 welcome centers under this \* \* \* section.

101 (b) The amount awarded each year shall be based on the  
102 actual budget and plan submitted by the \* \* \* county.

103 (c) Grants received by \* \* \* counties under this act  
104 shall only be used to offset staffing costs.

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

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



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

