

By: Senator(s) England, Boyd

To: Rules

## SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 39

1 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE 14 MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL HOPE  
2 SQUADS IN JACKSON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, AND SINGING RIVER HEALTH  
3 SYSTEM FOUNDATION WHICH FOSTER HUMAN CONNECTION, COMMUNITY, AND  
4 HOPE BY ELEVATING MENTAL WELL-BEING.

5 WHEREAS, we join the citizens of Jackson County and the  
6 entire State of Mississippi in commending the middle and high  
7 school Hope Squad advisors and student members for their laudable  
8 work to ensure all seven public middle schools and seven public  
9 high schools follow the Hope Squad curriculum in creating a  
10 culture of inclusivity and kindness; and

11 WHEREAS, in 2023, teen suicide attempt survivor and national  
12 speaker Emma Benoit introduced Hope Squad to the Singing River  
13 Health System Foundation and Jackson County Chamber of Commerce,  
14 which had been collaboratively seeking communal initiatives to  
15 improve mental health awareness and access, especially in  
16 teenagers, since the 2022 suicide death of East Central 8th-grader  
17 Sawyer Magee, as an evidence-based curriculum guided by school  
18 advisors and led by students; and



19 WHEREAS, the superintendents from Jackson County's four  
20 school districts: Jackson County, Moss Point, Ocean Springs, and  
21 Pascagoula-Gautier, along with a cadre of their counselors and  
22 educators, returned from their investigatory visit with Hope  
23 Squads at schools in the Florida Panhandle, and accepted Singing  
24 River Health System Foundation's offer to fund local Hope Squads,  
25 along with Chevron, Ingalls Shipbuilding, Mississippi Power,  
26 Merchants & Marine Bank, and Navigator Credit Union; and

27 WHEREAS, the 14 Hope Squads in Jackson County consist of 203  
28 middle and high school students who were nominated by their peers  
29 for their kind, inclusive, and trustworthy reputations, and  
30 trained in Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), the nationally  
31 recognized suicide prevention method and receive ongoing  
32 skill-building lessons; and

33 WHEREAS, the Hope Squads' peer-to-peer approach empowers the  
34 203 members across Jackson County to intentionally reach out to  
35 peers and become instruments of change, also creating school-wide  
36 activities, such as Hope 'Grams, Hope Chains, Hope Trees, festival  
37 booths, Cultivating Calmness events, and World Kindness Day  
38 recognition; and

39 WHEREAS, multiple research studies and articles indicate the  
40 significance of peer-to-peer methodology as a worthwhile approach  
41 to addressing documented increased levels of anxiety, depression,  
42 and hopelessness related to technology use and the impact of  
43 COVID-19 among teenagers; and



44 WHEREAS, the K-12 and Postsecondary Mental Health Task Force,  
45 composed of legislators, state officials, mental health and  
46 education professionals and one student, released an October 2024  
47 report recommending the implementation of pilot peer-to-peer  
48 programs to help students deal with trauma and promote mental  
49 health wellness at the high school, community college, and  
50 university levels with appropriate oversight from personnel,  
51 including administrators and mental health professionals; and

52 WHEREAS, the Hope Squad Program is a model that reflects  
53 strong community support from its nonprofit and private sector  
54 partners who support the students and their Hope Squad activities;  
55 and

56 WHEREAS, the Hope Squads include four district coordinators,  
57 14 school advisors, and 203 students, all passionate about mental  
58 health and wellbeing, from Colmer Middle School, East Central  
59 Middle School, East Central High School, Gautier Middle School,  
60 Gautier High School, Magnolia Middle School, Moss Point High  
61 School, Ocean Springs Middle School, Ocean Springs High School,  
62 Pascagoula High School, St. Martin Middle School, St. Martin High  
63 School, Vancleave Middle School, and Vancleave High School:

64 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF  
65 MISSISSIPPI, That we recognize the Singing River Health System  
66 Foundation and the 14 Hope Squads in middle and high schools  
67 across Jackson County, Mississippi, their outstanding advisors,  
68 student members, and community partners for their work providing



69 hopeful environments and encouraging healthy connections among  
70 themselves and across their communities.

71 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to  
72 the Singing River Health System Foundation Executive Director  
73 Laura Sessum and her colleagues and partners, and made available  
74 to the Capitol Press Corps.

