

By: Senator(s) Harden

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2244

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MISSISSIPPI CHILDREN'S CABINET AND
2 PROVIDE FOR ITS MEMBERSHIP; TO EMPOWER THE CHILDREN'S CABINET TO
3 SERVE AS THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL COORDINATING ENTITY FOR ALL STATE
4 AGENCIES SERVING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, TO COORDINATE BUDGETS,
5 MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS AND RECEIVE REPORTS; AND FOR RELATED
6 PURPOSES.

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

8 **SECTION 1.** (1) As used in this act, "children" means any
9 child age 0-18 who has not had his or her minority status removed
10 by court order.

11 (2) To ensure that children's needs are met within the
12 context of relationships at the family and community level and in
13 order to maximize the potential for children to succeed in school,
14 the Legislature hereby finds and declares that:

15 (a) Parents have the primary duty to care for
16 and educate their young preschool children;

17 (b) Any assistance provided families should consider
18 a family's preference for care-giving situations reflecting the
19 family's religious, cultural and community values;

20 (c) The State of Mississippi has numerous state
21 agencies which collaboratively support families and communities,
22 keeping family and children at the heart of all decisions.

23 (3) The Mississippi Children's Cabinet is hereby created to
24 ensure coordination among the various agencies and programs
25 serving children, families and communities to facilitate
26 interdepartmental communication, cooperation and maximum use of
27 resources and to promote high standards for all programs serving
28 children and their families in Mississippi.



29 (4) The membership of the Mississippi Children's Cabinet
30 shall be as follows:

31 (a) The State Superintendent of Education, or his
32 designee;

33 (b) The Executive Director of the Department of Health,
34 or his designee;

35 (c) The Executive Director of the Department of Human
36 Services, or his designee;

37 (d) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
38 Department of Mental Health, or his designee;

39 (e) The Attorney General, or his designee;

40 (f) A representative from the Office of the Governor.

41 (5) The cabinet shall meet upon call of the Governor not
42 later than August 1, 2002, and shall organize for business by
43 selecting a chairman who shall serve for a one-year term and may
44 be selected for subsequent terms. The cabinet shall adopt
45 internal organizational procedures necessary for efficient
46 operation of the cabinet. Cabinet procedures shall include duties
47 of officers, a process for selecting officers, quorum requirements
48 for conducting business and policies for any cabinet staff. Each
49 member of the cabinet shall designate necessary staff of their
50 departments to assist the cabinet in performing its duties and
51 responsibilities. The cabinet shall meet and conduct business at
52 least quarterly. Meetings of the cabinet shall be open to the
53 public and opportunity for public comment shall be made available
54 at each such meeting. The chairman of the cabinet shall notify
55 all persons who request such notice as to the date, time and place
56 of each meeting.

57 (6) Members of the cabinet shall receive no compensation for
58 their services, but shall be reimbursed for travel and other
59 expenses actually incurred in the performance of their official
60 duties. Such reimbursement shall be paid in accordance with the



61 provisions of Section 25-3-41, Mississippi Code of 1972, and shall
62 be approved by the chairman of the cabinet.

63 (7) The Mississippi Children's Cabinet shall perform each of
64 the following duties:

65 (a) Serve as interagency coordinating council for the
66 various agencies, public and private programs serving children and
67 their families in the State of Mississippi;

68 (b) Collect, compile and distribute data relating to
69 all programs and services for children and families, including,
70 but not limited to, an inventory of the programs and services
71 available in each county of the state; and identify and make
72 recommendations with regard to program areas for which an
73 unfulfilled need exists within the state for accurate and
74 accessible information;

75 (c) Review and analyze spending priorities for each
76 state agency which utilizes state or federal funds to administer
77 or provide programs and services for children and families and
78 make recommendations thereon to the Legislative Budget Committee
79 and the Governor;

80 (d) Publish annually, on or before November 1, a
81 comprehensive report on the status of all programs and services
82 for children and families in Mississippi and distribute the report
83 to the Governor, the Legislature, local school districts and make
84 the report available to the general public, using the following
85 criteria:

86 (i) Program name and location;

87 (ii) Dates of operation;

88 (iii) Service provided;

89 (iv) Target population and number served;

90 (v) Eligibility requirement;

91 (vi) Funding source;

92 (vii) Amount of funding per unit;

93 (viii) Annual cost;



94 (ix) Evaluation type and results; and
95 (x) The state agency administering the program.

96 (e) Receive and consider recommendations of the (i)
97 Juvenile Health Recovery Board established under Section 43-27-303
98 et seq.; (ii) The Children's Advisory Council established and
99 empowered under Section 43-14-1 et seq.; (iii) the Interagency
100 Advisory Committee for Early Childhood Services; and (iv) the
101 report of any other council task force or committee charged by law
102 or executive order to develop recommendations regarding children
103 and family services.

104 (f) Apply for, receive and administer funds for
105 research, planning and evaluation of all programs serving children
106 and their families.

107 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
108 and after July 1, 2002.

