

By: Senator(s) Farris

To: Public Health and
Welfare

SENATE BILL NO. 2394

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE THAT THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
2 SERVICES SHALL ADVERTISE A CONTRACT FOR PUBLIC BID AND AWARD A
3 CONTRACT TO COLLECT DATA REGARDING TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY
4 FAMILIES (TANF) RECIPIENTS IN CERTAIN COUNTIES, AND TO USE THE
5 DATA FROM THOSE COUNTIES IN PREPARING ITS STUDY AND EVALUATION OF
6 THE TANF WORK PROGRAM PURSUANT TO THE CONTRACT; TO REQUIRE THE
7 MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO COLLECT CERTAIN DATA
8 REGARDING THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK OPPORTUNITY
9 RECONCILIATION ACT OF 1996 AND TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY
10 FAMILIES (TANF) AND MAKE SUCH INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC;
11 TO REQUIRE THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO
12 COOPERATE IN ANY STUDY FUNDED BY A STATE, COUNTY OR MUNICIPAL
13 BODY, AND CONDUCTED BY AN INDEPENDENT EXPERT THAT CONCERNS THE
14 IMPACT UPON MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT ALIENS OF THE DENIAL OR
15 TERMINATION OF ASSISTANCE UNDER CERTAIN FEDERAL WELFARE PROGRAMS;
16 AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

18 **SECTION 1.** (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services
19 is hereby authorized to issue requests for proposals, advertise
20 the contract for public bid, and award a contract, subject to the
21 approval of the Personal Service Contract Review Board (Section
22 25-9-120), to study and evaluate the Temporary Assistance for
23 Needy Families (TANF) work program as follows:

24 The contractor shall conduct a longitudinal study of the
25 implementation of TANF and related welfare reforms. The research
26 group shall consist of experienced researchers in welfare policy,
27 social science and other relevant fields. The study shall include
28 the following urban counties: DeSoto, Forrest, Harrison, Hinds,
29 Jackson, Lauderdale, Lee and Washington, and shall include the
30 following rural counties: Bolivar, Clay, Holmes, Jefferson,
31 Jefferson Davis, Marshall, Noxubee, Perry, Quitman, Sharkey and
32 Wilkinson. The study shall select subgroups representing
33 important sectors of the assistance population, including type of
34 area of residence (city, suburban, small town, rural, region),



level of education, literacy, work experience, number of adults in the home, number and age of children in the home, teen parentage, English proficiency, where relevant, and other such subgroups chosen by the institution. For each subgroup, the study shall assemble a statistically valid sample of TANF cases enrolled prior to October 1, 1997. The study shall continue until December 31, 2005, and in the event this section is reenacted, the study shall continue until December 31, 2007. The Mississippi Department of Human Services and the contractor shall obtain permission to conduct the study from the subjects of the study and guarantee their privacy according to applicable privacy laws. To facilitate this permission, the study may be designed to refer to subjects by pseudonyms or codes and shall, in any event, guarantee anonymity to the subjects with limited access by outsiders to the data (other than identities) generated by the study. The contractor shall report the interim findings of the study with respect to each subgroup, to the Legislature by August 31 of each year, beginning August 31, 2003, and in the event this section is reenacted, shall report the final findings with respect to each subgroup by March 31, 2008. The reports shall be available to the public upon request.

(2) The contractor shall devise the study and identify the factors to be studied by not later than August 31, 2002. The study shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) The study shall include demographic breakdowns including, but not limited to, race, gender, age and number of children in the household.

(b) The subjects of the study shall be followed after denial or termination of assistance, to the extent feasible. The evaluator shall attempt to maintain personal contact with the subjects of the study, and employ such methods as meetings, telephone contacts, written surveys and computer matches with other data bases to accomplish this purpose. The intent of this



feature of the study is to discover the paths people take after leaving welfare and the patterns of return to welfare, including the factors that may influence these paths and patterns.

(c) The study shall examine the influence of various employability, education and training programs upon employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work (repeated application for welfare between periods of employment).

(d) The study shall examine the influence of various supportive services such as child care (including type and cost), transportation and payment of initial employment expenses upon employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

(e) The study shall examine the influence of government benefits that are authorized by TANF to be received by subjects after they have been employed upon employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

(f) The study shall examine the frequency of unplanned occurrences in subjects' lives, such as illness or injury, family members' illness or injury, car breakdown, strikes, natural disasters, evictions, loss of other sources of income, domestic violence and crime, and their impact upon employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

(g) The study shall examine the wages and other compensation, including health benefits and what they cost the employee, received by subjects who obtain employment, the type and characteristics of jobs, the hours and time of day of work, union status and the relationships of such factors to earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

(h) The study shall examine the reasons for subjects' job loss, the availability of unemployment insurance, the reasons for a subject's return to welfare, programs or services utilized by subjects in the search for another job, the characteristics of the subjects' next job and the relationships of these factors to



re-employment, earnings, job tenure on the new job and cycling between welfare and work.

(i) The study shall examine the impact of mandatory work requirements, including the types of work activities to which the subjects were assigned, and the links between the requirements and the activities and sanctions, employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

(j) The study shall identify all sources and amounts of reported household nonwage income and examine the influence of the sources and amounts of nonwage, nonwelfare income on employment, earnings, job tenure and cycling between welfare and work.

(k) The study shall examine sanctions, including child support enforcement and paternity establishment, the reasons sanctions are threatened, the number threatened, the number imposed and the reasons sanctions are not imposed or are ended, such as cooperation achieved or good cause established.

(l) The study shall track the subjects' usage of TANF benefits over the course of the lifetime sixty-month limit of TANF eligibility, including patterns of usage, relationships between consecutive usage of large numbers of months and other factors, status of all study subjects with respect to the time limit as of each report, characteristics of subjects exhausting the eligibility limit, types of exceptions granted to the sixty-month limit and numbers of cases within each type of exception.

(m) The study shall track subjects' participation in other public systems, including the public schools, the child welfare system, the criminal justice system, homeless and food services and others, and attempt to identify the positive or negative ripple effects in these systems of welfare policies, systems and procedures.

(n) The study shall examine the impact of the TANF program on the local economy and on other state agencies.



(3) The study authorized by this section shall only be funded by the Mississippi Department of Human Services from the TANF program federal block grant not to exceed Three Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$350,000.00) annually.

(4) All data, statistics, computer software and reports made under this section shall be considered public records and the property of the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

SECTION 2. (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services shall collect and report upon all data in connection with federally funded or assisted welfare programs as federal law may require, including, but not limited to, Section 411 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and its implementing regulations and any amendments thereto as may from time to time be enacted. Such data shall be made available to the public within one (1) week after it has been sent to the United States Department of Health and Human Services at each regional office of the Mississippi Department of Human Services.

(2) On the same schedule as the data collection required by federal law and subsection (1) of this section, the Mississippi Department of Human Services shall collect and report additional information with respect to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, as follows:

(a) With respect to denials of applications for benefits, all of the information about the family as required under federal law, plus the specific reason or reasons for denial of the application.

(b) With respect to all terminations of benefits, all of the information as required under federal law, plus the specific reason or reasons for the termination or sanction.

(3) The Mississippi Department of Human Services shall collect all of the data as set forth in subsections (1) and (2) of this section on all cash assistance benefits provided to TANF



recipients that are not funded from the TANF program federal block grant or are not otherwise required to be included in the data collection and reporting provided for in subsections (1) and (2) of this section, and shall report such information on the same schedule as is required for the information collected in subsections (1) and (2) of this section.

(4) Reports made under this section shall be considered public records and shall promptly be made available to the public upon request at the end of each fiscal year at a reasonable cost directly related to the cost of copying and mailing the reports. The data underlying the reports shall be made available to academic institutions and public policy organizations involved in the study of welfare issues or programs after any reductions made to conform with applicable privacy laws. The data shall be provided by the Mississippi Department of Human Services at a reasonable cost directly related to the cost of copying and mailing the data.

(5) No later than July 1, 2002, the Mississippi Department of Human Services shall appoint seven (7) persons to an advisory panel. Four (4) panel members shall be experienced researchers in welfare policy, social science and other related fields from institutions of higher learning located in the Delta, northeast, southwest, southern or urban areas of Mississippi, one (1) member shall be a representative of the business community, one (1) member shall be a current or former welfare recipient, and one (1) member shall be a representative of a nonprofit human service organization. The role of the advisory panel is to ensure input from all sectors in the development of the research design and during the research process. Its role is advisory in nature and it is not empowered to direct the research effort or to specify results. The advisory panel shall have the following responsibilities:



(a) To advise researchers with regard to availability of data pertaining to elements to be studied according to legislation;

(b) To play a consulting role in reviewing and reacting to the overall research design of the study;

(c) To review interim and final reports of the research team; and

(d) To review and advise researchers on policy recommendations emanating from the research process.

Analysis and interpretation of data gathered under the guidance of the research design and based upon the specifics delineated by the legislation shall be solely the responsibility of the contractor.

SECTION 3. The Mississippi Department of Human Services shall cooperate in any study funded by a federal, state, county or municipal body, and conducted by an independent expert, concerning the impact upon Mississippi residents of the denial or termination of assistance under the Food Stamps, TANF, Medicaid and Title XX social services programs pursuant to the changes enacted in the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The purpose of such a study must be to examine the immediate and long-term effects on this population and on the state of the denial or termination of these forms of assistance, including the impact on the individuals, the alternate means they find to obtain support and care, and the impact on state and local spending and human services delivery systems. Such a study shall select a statistically valid sample of persons denied or terminated from each type of benefit and attempt to track them at least until July 31, 2003. Any reports from studies conducted with the cooperation of the Mississippi Department of Human Services shall be made available to the Legislature upon request, and a final report shall be submitted upon completion. These reports shall be available to the public upon request.



231 **SECTION 4.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
232 and after July 1, 2002; and shall stand repealed from and after
233 December 31, 2005.

