

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),



35 level of education, literacy, work experience, number of adults in
36 the home, number and age of children in the home, teen parentage,
37 English proficiency, where relevant, and other such subgroups
38 chosen by the institution. For each subgroup, the study shall
39 assemble a statistically valid sample of TANF cases enrolled prior
40 to October 1, 1997. The study shall continue until December 31,
41 2005, and in the event this section is reenacted, the study shall
42 continue until December 31, 2007. The Mississippi Department of
43 Human Services and the contractor shall obtain permission to
44 conduct the study from the subjects of the study and guarantee
45 their privacy according to applicable privacy laws. To facilitate
46 this permission, the study may be designed to refer to subjects by
47 pseudonyms or codes and shall, in any event, guarantee anonymity
48 to the subjects with limited access by outsiders to the data
49 (other than identities) generated by the study. The contractor
50 shall report the interim findings of the study with respect to
51 each subgroup, to the Legislature by August 31 of each year,
52 beginning August 31, 2003, and in the event this section is
53 reenacted, shall report the final findings with respect to each
54 subgroup by March 31, 2008. The reports shall be available to the
55 public upon request.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

140 **SECTION 2.** (1) The Mississippi Department of Human Services
141 shall collect and report upon all data in connection with
142 federally funded or assisted welfare programs as federal law may
143 require, including, but not limited to, Section 411 of the
144 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of
145 1996 and its implementing regulations and any amendments thereto
146 as may from time to time be enacted. Such data shall be made
147 available to the public within one (1) week after it has been sent
148 to the United States Department of Health and Human Services at
149 each regional office of the Mississippi Department of Human
150 Services.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

211 **SECTION 3.** The Mississippi Department of Human Services
212 shall cooperate in any study funded by a federal, state, county or
213 municipal body, and conducted by an independent expert, concerning
214 the impact upon Mississippi residents of the denial or termination
215 of assistance under the Food Stamps, TANF, Medicaid and Title XX
216 social services programs pursuant to the changes enacted in the
217 federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity
218 Reconciliation Act of 1996. The purpose of such a study must be
219 to examine the immediate and long-term effects on this population
220 and on the state of the denial or termination of these forms of
221 assistance, including the impact on the individuals, the alternate
222 means they find to obtain support and care, and the impact on
223 state and local spending and human services delivery systems.
224 Such a study shall select a statistically valid sample of persons
225 denied or terminated from each type of benefit and attempt to
226 track them at least until July 31, 2003. Any reports from studies
227 conducted with the cooperation of the Mississippi Department of
228 Human Services shall be made available to the Legislature upon
229 request, and a final report shall be submitted upon completion.
230 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.

