

By: Senator(s) Harden, Burton, Frazier,
Gordon, Jackson, King, Lee, Little, Mettetal,
Smith, Tollison, Walls, Williamson

To: Education;
Appropriations

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 2636

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF EARLY
2 CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS OPERATING IN THE STATE; TO DIRECT THE
3 STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT OF ALL
4 PREKINDERGARTEN SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS OPERATED BY PUBLIC OR
5 PRIVATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE STATE OR BY HEAD START PROGRAMS;
6 TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO INCLUDE CERTAIN DATA IN
7 THE ASSESSMENT; TO DIRECT LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS OPERATING
8 PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS AND OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR
9 PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN TO PROVIDE CERTAIN DATA TO THE STATE BOARD
10 OF EDUCATION; TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO MAKE
11 RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL
12 PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS OR SERVICES AND THE STEPS NECESSARY TO
13 ENSURE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS OPERATED BY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS
14 IN THE STATE MEET OR EXCEED RECOGNIZED STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE; TO
15 DIRECT THE OFFICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT
16 OF HUMAN SERVICES, TO CONDUCT AN ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL
17 READINESS PROGRAMS OPERATED BY LICENSED CHILDCARE CENTERS IN THE
18 STATE; TO DIRECT THE OFFICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO INCLUDE
19 CERTAIN DATA IN THE ASSESSMENT; TO DIRECT THE DIVISION OF CHILD
20 CARE LICENSURE OF THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH TO ASSIST BOTH
21 AGENCIES WITH RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO THE LICENSING OF
22 CHILDCARE FACILITIES; TO DIRECT THE AGENCIES TO PRODUCE A REPORT
23 ON THE FINDINGS OF THE ASSESSMENT THAT INCLUDES RECOMMENDATIONS ON
24 THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS OR SERVICES, THE
25 STEPS NECESSARY TO ENSURE ALL EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS OPERATING
26 IN THE STATE MEET OR EXCEED RECOGNIZE STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE, AND
27 RECOMMENDED ENHANCEMENTS TO THOSE STANDARDS WHEN PROGRAMS SERVE AN
28 AT-RISK CHILD POPULATION; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

30 **SECTION 1.** (1) Prior to September 1, 2003, the State Board
31 of Education shall conduct an assessment of all prekindergarten
32 structured school or school readiness programs, including pilot
33 programs, operated by a public, private or parochial school or a
34 Head Start program in the state. The assessment shall include,
35 but not be limited to, data that identifies the population served
36 by each program, including the age and number of children served
37 in total and in each classroom; the number and qualifications of
38 teachers and teacher assistants in total and in each classroom;
39 the days and hours of program operation; the criteria used to
40 determine eligibility for enrollment; the early care and education



41 programs attended by these children prior to enrollment, or in
42 addition to current enrollment; hours of parental employment;
43 identification of eligibility of the enrolled population for any
44 other publicly-supported programs; and how each district is
45 evaluating the success of these programs. The assessment shall
46 also include data comparing program operation to the Regulations
47 Governing the Operation of a Licensed Child Care Facility
48 established by the State Board of Health and the accreditation
49 standards of the National Association for the Education of Young
50 Children. The assessment shall also include data comparing the
51 benchmarks of the prekindergarten and kindergarten curriculums
52 authorized by the State Board of Education to the developmental
53 milestones recognized by the Department of Pediatrics of the
54 University Medical Center as representing the optimum development
55 of children three (3) to five (5) years of age.

56 (2) Local school districts operating a prekindergarten
57 program shall provide local program data to the Department of
58 Education as directed by the State Board of Education.

59 **SECTION 2.** Prior to September 1, 2003, the Office for
60 Children and Youth, Mississippi Department of Human Services,
61 shall conduct an assessment of all school readiness programs
62 operated by licensed childcare centers in the state. The
63 assessment shall include, but not be limited to, data that
64 identifies the population served by each program, including the
65 age and number of children served in total and in each classroom;
66 the number and qualifications of teachers and teacher assistants
67 in total and in each classroom; the days and hours of program
68 operation; the criteria used to determine eligibility for
69 enrollment; the early care and education programs attended by
70 these children prior to enrollment, or in addition to current
71 enrollment; hours of parental employment; identification of
72 eligibility of the enrolled population for any other
73 publicly-supported programs; and how each program is evaluating



74 the success of these programs. The assessment shall also include
75 data comparing program operation to the Regulations Governing the
76 Operation of a Licensed Child Care Facility established by the
77 State Board of Health and the accreditation standards of the
78 National Association for the Education of Young Children. The
79 assessment shall also include data comparing the benchmarks of the
80 prekindergarten and kindergarten curriculum authorized by the
81 State Board of Education to the developmental milestones
82 recognized by the Department of Pediatrics of the University
83 Medical Center as representing the optimum development of children
84 three (3) to five (5) years of age.

85 **SECTION 3.** The Division of Child Care Licensure, Mississippi
86 State Department of Health, shall assist the State Department of
87 Education and the Department of Human Services in carrying out
88 those responsibilities related to the licensing of childcare
89 facilities.

90 **SECTION 4.** (1) The State Department of Education, the
91 Department of Human Services and the State Department of Health
92 shall consider the findings of the assessment and make
93 recommendations on the need for additional early childhood
94 education programs or services and the steps necessary to ensure
95 early childhood education programs operating in the state meet or
96 exceed recognized standards of excellence. The said agencies
97 shall submit a report of the findings of the assessment and any
98 recommendations based on these findings to the Legislature no
99 later than January 1, 2004. The said agencies shall also make the
100 report and recommendations available to the Interagency Council on
101 Early Childhood Services and the Advisory Committee to the Council
102 for the review and comment of the membership. Any comments and
103 recommendations adopted by the council shall be included in the
104 report to the Legislature.

105 (2) The State Department of Education, the Department of
106 Human Services and the State Department of Health shall jointly



107 develop a single assessment instrument and shall utilize existing
108 staff to collect and compile data required under this section into
109 a single report. The said agencies shall post the report on the
110 agency website for use by the Interagency Council on Early
111 Childhood Services in the preparation of the council's annual
112 report to the Legislature. It is the intent of the Legislature
113 that any funds used shall be associated with the production and
114 duplication of the report to make the information available to the
115 Legislature.

116 **SECTION 5.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
117 and after its passage.

