

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

To: Education;
Appropriations

SENATE BILL NO. 2636
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF THE STATUS OF EARLY
2 CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS OPERATING IN THE STATE; TO ESTABLISH
3 AN OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO OVERSEE THE PROCESS AND CONDUCTING OF
4 ASSESSMENTS UNDER THIS ACT; TO PROVIDE FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF ALL
5 PREKINDERGARTEN SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS OPERATED BY PUBLIC OR
6 PRIVATE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE STATE OR BY HEAD START PROGRAMS;
7 TO DIRECT THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE CERTAIN DATA IN THE
8 ASSESSMENT; TO DIRECT LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS OPERATING
9 PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS AND OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR
10 PRESCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN TO PROVIDE CERTAIN DATA TO THE STATE BOARD
11 OF EDUCATION; TO PROVIDE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NEED FOR
12 ADDITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOL PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS OR SERVICES AND
13 THE STEPS NECESSARY TO ENSURE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS OPERATED BY
14 LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN THE STATE MEET OR EXCEED RECOGNIZED
15 STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE; TO PROVIDE FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF THE
16 SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS OPERATED BY LICENSED CHILDCARE CENTERS
17 IN THE STATE; TO DIRECT THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO INCLUDE CERTAIN
18 DATA IN THE ASSESSMENT; TO DIRECT THE DIVISION OF CHILD CARE
19 LICENSURE OF THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH TO ASSIST THE OVERSIGHT
20 COMMITTEE WITH RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO THE LICENSING OF
21 CHILDCARE FACILITIES; TO DIRECT THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO PRODUCE
22 A REPORT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE ASSESSMENT THAT INCLUDES
23 RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD
24 PROGRAMS OR SERVICES AND THE STEPS NECESSARY TO ENSURE ALL EARLY
25 CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS OPERATING IN THE STATE MEET OR EXCEED RECOGNIZE
26 STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

28 **SECTION 1.** (1) Prior to October 1, 2003, the Oversight
29 Committee established in Section 5 of this act shall cause to be
30 conducted an assessment of all prekindergarten structured school
31 or school readiness programs, including pilot programs, operated
32 by a public, private or parochial school or a Head Start program
33 in the state. The assessment shall include, but not be limited
34 to, data that identifies the population served by each program,
35 including the age and number of children served in total and in
36 each classroom; the number and qualifications of teachers and
37 teacher assistants in total and in each classroom; the days and
38 hours of program operation; the criteria used to determine
39 eligibility for enrollment; the early care and education programs



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

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

56 **SECTION 2.** Prior to October 1, 2003, the Oversight Committee
57 established in Section 5 of this act, shall cause to be conducted
58 an assessment of all school readiness programs operated by
59 licensed childcare centers in the state. The assessment shall
60 include, but not be limited to, data that identifies the
61 population served by each program, including the age and number of
62 children served in total and in each classroom; the number and
63 qualifications of teachers and teacher assistants in total and in
64 each classroom; the days and hours of program operation; the
65 criteria used to determine eligibility for enrollment; the early
66 care and education programs attended by these children prior to
67 enrollment, or in addition to current enrollment; hours of
68 parental employment; identification of eligibility of the enrolled
69 population for any other publicly-supported programs; and how each
70 program is evaluating the success of these programs. The
71 assessment shall also include data comparing program operation to
72 the Regulations Governing the Operation of a Licensed Child Care



73 Facility. The assessment shall also include data comparing the
74 benchmarks of the prekindergarten and kindergarten curriculum
75 authorized by the State Board of Education to the developmental
76 milestones recognized by the Department of Pediatrics of the
77 University Medical Center as representing the optimum development
78 of children three (3) to five (5) years of age.

79 **SECTION 3.** The Division of Child Care Licensure, Mississippi
80 State Department of Health, shall assist the Oversight Committee
81 established in Section 5 of this act in carrying out those
82 responsibilities related to the licensing of childcare facilities.

83 **SECTION 4.** (1) The Oversight Committee established in
84 Section 5 of this act shall consider the findings of the
85 assessment and make recommendations on the need for additional
86 early childhood education programs or services and the steps
87 necessary to ensure early childhood education programs operating
88 in the state meet or exceed recognized standards of excellence.
89 The Oversight Committee shall submit a report of the findings of
90 the assessment and any recommendations based on these findings to
91 the Legislature no later than January 15, 2004. The Oversight
92 Committee shall also make the report and recommendations available
93 to the Interagency Council on Early Childhood Services and the
94 Advisory Committee to the Council for the review and comment of
95 the membership. Any comments and recommendations adopted by the
96 council shall be included in the report to the Legislature.

97 (2) The Oversight Committee established in Section 5 of this
98 act shall cause to be developed a single assessment instrument to
99 collect and compile data required under this section into a single
100 report. It is the intent of the Legislature that any funds used
101 shall be associated with the production and duplication of the
102 report to make the information available to the Legislature.

103 **SECTION 5.** There shall be established an Oversight
104 Committee, which shall oversee the process and conducting of



105 assessments in order to carry out the mandates of this act. The
106 committee shall consist of the following members:

107 (a) A representative of the State Department of
108 Education designated by the State Board of Education who shall
109 serve as chairman of the committee;

110 (b) A representative of the State Department of Health
111 designated by the State Board of Health;

112 (c) A representative of the State Department of Human
113 Services designated by the Executive Director of the State
114 Department of Human Services;

115 (d) The President of the Mississippi Head Start
116 Association, or his designee;

117 (e) A representative of a licensed child care center
118 appointed by the Lieutenant Governor;

119 (f) A representative of a private or parochial school
120 prekindergarten program appointed by the Speaker of the House of
121 Representatives;

122 (g) A representative from a university or college early
123 childhood program appointed by the Lieutenant Governor;

124 (h) A representative of an advocacy organization
125 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

126 (i) A representative of a community or junior college
127 early childhood program appointed by the Governor; and

128 (j) A representative of the cooperative extension
129 service appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. All required
130 appointments to the Oversight Committee shall be made not later
131 than May 15, 2003. The Oversight Committee shall meet on a date
132 designated by the chairman, not later than May 15, 2003, to
133 organize, elect a chairman and establish rules for transacting its
134 business and keeping records.

135 **SECTION 6.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
136 and after its passage.

