

By: Representative Paden

To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 249

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO INCLUDE INSTRUCTION IN
 2 MENTAL ILLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THE HEALTH EDUCATION COMPONENT
 3 OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM; TO DESCRIBE
 4 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE MENTAL HEALTH INSTRUCTION; TO REQUIRE
 5 IN-SERVICE TRAINING ON MENTAL ILLNESS FOR LICENSED SCHOOL
 6 EMPLOYEES; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

8 **SECTION 1.** (1) Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year,
 9 the health education component of the Comprehensive School Health
 10 Education Program must include instruction in mental illness and
 11 mental health. The Office of Comprehensive School Health
 12 Education shall identify the elementary grade level that is most
 13 appropriate for incorporating the mental illness and mental health
 14 instruction into health education and shall require
 15 age-appropriate mental illness and mental health instruction to be
 16 included in the curriculum for that grade and all higher grade
 17 levels. The mental illness and mental health instruction must be
 18 taught during the minimum instructional time required under
 19 Section 37-13-134(1) to be dedicated to health education
 20 instruction.



21 (2) The mental illness and mental health instruction must
22 include, at a minimum, the following objectives for students:

23 (a) Understanding mental health problems and gaining an
24 awareness of the myths and realities of mental illness;

25 (b) Destigmatizing mental illness and improving
26 attitudes toward seeking help for mental health problems;

27 (c) Recognizing signs and symptoms of mental illness;

28 (d) Employing positive coping techniques to address
29 stress that does not rise to a level requiring professional
30 treatment but if left unattended, may lead to mental illness; and

31 (e) Utilizing professional resources available to
32 students to address mental health issues affecting a student or
33 member of a student's family, including telephone numbers of
34 assistance hotlines and Internet websites of mental health
35 agencies that serve the region in which a school is located.

36 (3) The State Department of Education shall require each
37 local school district to conduct in-service training on mental
38 illness for all licensed school district employees. The
39 department, in conjunction with the State Department of Mental
40 Health, shall develop the content and materials for the training
41 which, at a minimum, must include recognizing signs and symptoms
42 of mental illness in students.

43 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
44 and after July 1, 2024.

