

By: Representative Scott

To: Education;
Appropriations A

HOUSE BILL NO. 601

1 AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, ACTING
2 JOINTLY WITH THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH AND THE MISSISSIPPI
3 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, TO ESTABLISH A PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL
4 COUNSELORS PILOT PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF
5 EDUCATION, THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE MISSISSIPPI
6 DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO DETERMINE THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN
7 WHICH THE PILOT PROGRAM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED; TO REQUIRE THE STATE
8 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE
9 MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES TO EVALUATE THE
10 EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PILOT PROGRAM; TO PROHIBIT ANY EFFORT TO
11 COUNSEL THAT ABORTION CAN BE USED TO PREVENT THE BIRTH OF A BABY;
12 TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, WITH THE INPUT OF
13 THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
14 HUMAN SERVICES, TO SUBMIT A REPORT ON THE PILOT PROGRAM TO THE
15 CHAIRMEN OF CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2029;
16 TO AMEND SECTION 37-9-79, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, IN CONFORMITY
17 TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

19 **SECTION 1.** (1) (a) The State Board of Education shall
20 establish and implement a Professional School Counselors Pilot
21 Program to provide comprehensive counseling services as required
22 under Section 37-9-79, in certain school districts with high
23 incidences of teenage pregnancy and school violence in the State
24 of Mississippi.



25 (b) The purpose of the pilot program shall be to
26 evidence the effectiveness of the services provided by
27 professional school counselors in personal and social counseling,
28 crisis intervention and prevention, conflict resolution and
29 educational and career counseling in schools and school districts
30 with counselors on staff, as opposed to those schools and school
31 districts without professional school counselors on staff.

32 (2) (a) The State Department of Education, acting jointly
33 with the State Department of Health and the Mississippi Department
34 of Human Services shall analyze all data available to each
35 department to select three (3) school districts throughout the
36 state with high incidences of teenage pregnancy or high incidences
37 of school violence to determine which districts would be impacted
38 most positively by the Professional School Counselors Pilot
39 Program.

40 (b) In making the selection, the departments shall
41 identify those school districts having the highest incidences of
42 teen pregnancies and school violence among students and shall
43 consider other appropriate factors including, but not necessarily
44 limited to, each school district's: dropout rate; the number of
45 the students placed in the alternative school setting; urban or
46 rural nature; geographical location; demographic profile; and
47 state accreditation level.

48 (3) The Professional School Counselors Pilot Program shall
49 be a four-year program and will be implemented in those school



50 districts selected for participation in the program in the
51 2024-2025 school year. The program will be continued in the same
52 school districts during the 2025-2026, 2026-2027 and 2027-2028
53 school years. For the duration of the pilot program, the school
54 district shall place a minimum of one (1) professional school
55 counselor in each school in the district.

56 (4) At the end of each school year, the State Department of
57 Education, the State Department of Health and the Mississippi
58 Department of Human Services evaluate the effectiveness of the
59 presence and availability of profession school counselors in each
60 school in reducing the rates of teen pregnancy or school violence.

61 (5) It shall be the responsibility of professional school
62 counselors employed by local school districts implementing the
63 pilot program to carry out the functions of those strategies to
64 promote consistency in the administration of the program and the
65 provisions of Section 37-9-79.

66 (6) The State Board of Education, in overseeing the
67 administration of the Professional School Counselors Pilot Program
68 in those select school districts implementing the program and
69 strategies developed by the State Department of Education, State
70 Department of Health and the Mississippi Department of Human
71 Services under this section, shall prohibit any effort of a
72 professional school counselor to counsel students that abortion
73 can be used to prevent the birth of a baby.



74 (7) Before January 1, 2029, the State Department of
75 Education, after consultation with the State Department of Health
76 and the Mississippi Department of Human Services, shall submit a
77 report to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Education
78 Committees, the House Public Health and Human Services Committee
79 and the Senate Public Health and Welfare Committee on the results
80 of the Professional School Counselors Pilot Program. The report
81 must include comparative data on the numbers of pregnancies and
82 incidences of school violence among students in the participating
83 school districts before and during each year of the pilot program.
84 The report also must include a recommendation on whether or not
85 the Professional School Counselors Pilot Program should be
86 implemented on a permanent basis in all or certain school
87 districts of the state.

88 **SECTION 2.** Section 37-9-79, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
89 amended as follows:

90 37-9-79. (1) Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the
91 assignment of K-12 Professional School Counselors to the
92 particular schools within the district shall be at the discretion
93 of the local school board with the following restrictions:

94 (a) No individual shall be employed as a professional
95 school counselor without a minimum of a Master's Degree in
96 Guidance and Counseling, or in an emergency situation, an
97 appropriate certification as determined by the Commission on



98 Teacher and Administrator Education, Certification and Licensure
99 and Development; and

100 (b) Professional school counselors shall provide the
101 following comprehensive counseling services:

102 (i) Academic and personal/social counseling;

103 (ii) Use multiple student data sources to help
104 students make informed academic and career choices;

105 (iii) Career and educational counseling;

106 (iv) Individual and group counseling
107 (large/small);

108 (v) Crisis intervention and preventive counseling;

109 (vi) Referrals to community agencies;

110 (vii) Educational consultations and collaboration
111 with teachers, administrators, parents and community leaders;

112 (viii) Educational and career placement services;

113 (ix) Follow-up counseling services;

114 (x) Conflict resolution; and

115 (xi) Professional school counselors must spend a
116 minimum of eighty percent (80%) of their contractual time to the
117 delivery of services to students as outlined by the American
118 School Counselor Association. Delivery of services is the direct
119 service provided to students, parents, school staff and the
120 community which are interaction between professional school
121 counselors and students. These direct services may include the
122 delivery of the following:



123 1. School counseling core curriculum: This
124 curriculum is designed to help students attain the desired
125 competencies and to provide all students with the knowledge,
126 attitudes and skills appropriate for their developmental level.
127 The school counseling core curriculum is delivered throughout the
128 school's overall curriculum and may be presented by professional
129 school counselors in collaboration with other professional
130 educators and other resources. Collaborative efforts may be
131 implemented to enhance the services provided.

132 2. Individual student planning: Professional
133 school counselors coordinate ongoing systemic activities or
134 individual/group sessions designed to assist students in
135 establishing personal/social goals and developing future career
136 plans.

137 3. Responsive services: Responsive services
138 are designed to meet students' immediate needs and concerns in
139 regard to social/personal issues. Responsive services may include
140 counseling in individual, small-group settings, or crisis
141 responses.

142 4. Indirect Student Services: Indirect
143 services are provided on behalf of students as a result of the
144 school counselors' interactions with others including referrals
145 for additional assistance, consultation and collaboration with
146 parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations.



147 (2) Professional school counselors shall abide by the
148 American School Counselor Association Code of Ethics.

149 (3) The State Department of Education may adopt regulations
150 regarding the activities of the professional school counselor as
151 are not inconsistent with this section.

152 (4) Professional school counselors employed by school
153 districts implementing the pilot program authorized under Section
154 1 of this act shall adhere to minimum qualification requirements
155 of this section, and shall carry out those functions implemented
156 under the pilot program developed by the State Department of
157 Education, the State Department of Health and the Mississippi
158 Department of Human Services.

159 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
160 and after July 1, 2024.

