SENATE BILL NO. 2725

AN ACT TO CREATE THE "MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITY SYSTEM EFFICIENCY TASK FORCE" CREATED TO EXAMINE THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN MISSISSIPPI, AS IT RELATES TO THE UNIVERSITIES' COLLECTIVE MISSION OF ENROLLING AND GRADUATING MORE DEGREEED MISSISSIPPIANS AND RETAINING THEM IN THE STATE, AND ANTICIPATED NATIONWIDE CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS AND A PROJECTED OVERALL DECLINE IN ENROLLMENT; TO REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE ON CHANGES TO POLICY AND LAWS IN MISSISSIPPI WITH A GOAL OF INCREASING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM IN THE STATE; TO SET THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK FORCE; TO PROVIDE FOR OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED THERETO, INCLUDING PER DIEM AND VOTING; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) There is hereby established the "Mississippi University System Efficiency Task Force" created to examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the public university system in Mississippi, as it relates to the universities' collective mission of enrolling and graduating more degreeed Mississipians and retaining them in the state, and anticipated nationwide challenges with regard to demographic shifts and a projected overall decline in enrollment. The task force shall develop recommendations to the Legislature on changes to policy and laws in Mississippi with
a goal of increasing the efficiency of the public university
system in Mississippi, planning for future demographic shifts and
possible enrollment declines at all institutions and the state
level, and continuing progression toward the goal of increasing
the post-secondary education attainment level in the state.

(2) The members of the task force shall be as follows:
   (a) The Chairmen of the Universities and Colleges
       Committees of the Mississippi Senate and Mississippi House of
       Representatives, or their designees from their respective
       committee membership;

   (b) The Chairmen of the Appropriation Committees of the
       Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
       or their designees from their respective committee membership;

   (c) The Chairmen of the Finance Committee of the
       Mississippi Senate and the Ways and Means Committee of the
       Mississippi House of Representatives, or their designees from
       their respective committee membership;

   (d) The Director of the University Research Center and
       State Economist, or his or her designee;

   (e) One (1) designee who holds an undergraduate degree
       from one (1) of the four (4) public regional universities in
       Mississippi appointed by the Governor. Such designee shall have
       significant business or other professional experience and shall be
       a resident of the State of Mississippi;
(f) One (1) designee who holds an undergraduate degree from one (1) of the three (3) public historically black universities in Mississippi appointed by the Governor. Such designee shall have significant business or other professional experience and shall be a resident of the State of Mississippi; and

(g) One (1) designee who holds an undergraduate degree from one (1) of the four (4) public research universities in Mississippi appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. Such designee shall have significant business or other professional experience and shall be a resident of the State of Mississippi.

(3) The task force shall meet within forty-five (45) days of the effective date of this act and shall evaluate the current data, resources, and laws and policies of the State of Mississippi. Specifically, the task force shall:

(a) Evaluate the current funding formula and appropriations process for the Mississippi public university system, particularly as it relates to enrollment and graduation rates;

(b) Evaluate the process of developing physical plant plans for Mississippi's public universities, including the use of enrollment data and projections in such plans and the Mississippi Institution of Higher Learning's role in determining collective system needs requiring additional state resources;
(c) Collect and analyze publicly available data and statistics related to enrollment and graduation rates and projections, with particular focus on the enrollment and graduation rates of Mississippi residents, as well as other data relating to shifting demographics, at all of Mississippi's public universities;

(d) Examine any existing or developing plans, both on an individual public university and university system basis, to address projected demographic shifts and enrollment declines;

(e) Evaluate successful strategies for addressing challenges in efficiency and enrollment in the Mississippi university system and across the nation, including current partnerships across the system; and

(f) Review any other matters related to the above issues or the efficiency and effectiveness of the public university system in Mississippi.

(4) The task force may request the assistance of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning and any other related agency, entity or organization with expertise in higher education, demographic, enrollment and other issues.

(5) The Chairmen of the Universities and Colleges Committees in the Mississippi Senate and Mississippi House of Representatives shall call the first meeting. The members of the task force shall elect a Chair or co-Chairs from among the members at its first meeting. The task force shall develop and report its findings and
recommendations to the Mississippi Legislature on or before October 1, 2024. A majority of the membership shall be required to approve any final report and recommendation. Meetings of the task force shall be held at the State Capitol; however, if it is not feasible for the task force to hold an in-person meeting, the task force may convene utilizing an online meeting platform that is accessible for viewing by the public.

(6) Subject to appropriations, members of the task force who are not state employees may be compensated at the per diem rate authorized by Section 25-3-69 and reimbursed in accordance with Section 25-3-41 for mileage and actual expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. However, task force members may not incur per diem, travel or other expenses unless previously authorized by vote at a meeting of the task force, which action must be recorded in the official minutes of the meeting. Per diem and expense payments made pursuant to this subsection may be paid from any funds made available to the task force for that purpose.

(7) The Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review shall provide necessary clerical support for the meetings of the task force and the preparation of the report.

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