

By: Senator(s) Boyd, Parker

To: Public Health and
Welfare; Universities and
Colleges

SENATE BILL NO. 2727
(As Passed the Senate)

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MISSISSIPPI K-12 AND POSTSECONDARY
2 MENTAL HEALTH TASK FORCE DRAWING ON AVAILABLE DATA TO DETERMINE
3 CHALLENGES IN MISSISSIPPI AS IT RELATES TO THE MENTAL HEALTH OF
4 STUDENTS RANGING FROM K-12 THROUGH THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND
5 UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS, ASSESS THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESOURCES
6 CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO YOUTH SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION, TRAUMA AND
7 SUICIDAL IDEATION, AND DETERMINE WHERE GAPS EXIST IN SERVICE
8 DELIVERY AND TREATMENT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK
9 FORCE; TO REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO REVIEW AND MAKE
10 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LEGISLATURE REGARDING AVAILABLE RESOURCES
11 AND GAPS IN RESOURCES TO ADDRESS THIS CRISIS; TO PROVIDE FOR THE
12 GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TASK FORCE; TO REQUIRE THE TASK
13 FORCE TO DEVELOP AND REPORT ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
14 PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO THE LEGISLATURE ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1,
15 2024; TO RECONSTITUTE THE EARLY INTERVENTION TASK FORCE WITH A
16 GOAL TO COLLABORATE WITH THE STATE AGENCY COORDINATING PART C OF
17 IDEA TO DESIGN A NEW SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL AND MAKE CHANGES TO
18 THE EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM; TO SET THE TASK FORCE'S DUTIES; TO
19 REQUIRE THE TASK FORCE TO PREPARE A FINAL REPORT TO THE
20 LEGISLATURE; TO REQUIRE THE STATE AGENCY COORDINATING PART C OF
21 IDEA TO PREPARE AND DELIVER A REPORT THAT PROVIDES FOR POSSIBLE
22 SOLUTIONS; TO DISSOLVE THE TASK FORCE UPON PRESENTATION OF THE
23 REPORT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

25 **SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby established the "Mississippi
26 K-12 and Postsecondary Mental Health Task Force," created to
27 address growing concerns related to student mental health. The
28 goal of the task force shall include, but not be limited to,



29 drawing on available data to determine challenges in Mississippi
30 as it relates to the mental health of students ranging from K-12
31 through the community college and university systems; assessing
32 public and private resources currently available to students who
33 need help managing mental health issues; assessing training and
34 procedures in place for teachers, school district personnel and
35 community college and university personnel; and determining where
36 gaps exist in training and resources; exploring partnerships
37 across communities to better serve students; and examining
38 successful programs in Mississippi and across the nation. The
39 task force shall develop recommendations to the Legislature on
40 changes to policy and laws in Mississippi with a goal of better
41 identifying students at all levels struggling with mental health
42 issues; training school, community college and university
43 personnel related to student mental health, and thus improving
44 health outcomes and the probability of student success.

45 (2) The members of the task force shall be as follows:

46 (a) The Chairmen of the Education Committees of the
47 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
48 or their designees from their respective committee membership;

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

52 (c) The Chairmen of the Universities and Colleges
53 Committees of the Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of



54 Representatives, or their designees from their respective
55 committee membership;

56 (d) The Superintendent of the Mississippi Department of
57 Education, or his or her designee;

58 (e) The Executive Director of the Mississippi
59 Department of Mental Health, or his or her designee;

60 (f) The Director of the Mississippi Division of
61 Medicaid, or his or her designee;

62 (g) The State Health Officer of the Mississippi
63 Department of Health, or his or her designee;

64 (h) One (1) psychiatrist with expertise in treating
65 children to be appointed by the Governor;

66 (i) One (1) clinical psychologist with expertise in
67 treating children appointed by the Lieutenant Governor;

68 (j) One (1) school psychologist employed or contracted
69 by a Mississippi Public School District, to be named by the
70 Mississippi Association of Psychologists in the Schools;

71 (k) One (1) public school teacher appointed by the
72 Governor;

73 (l) One (1) employee of a university counseling center,
74 or a person otherwise responsible for coordinating or providing
75 student mental health services on campus, appointed by the
76 Governor;

77 (m) One (1) public school counselor appointed by the
78 Lieutenant Governor;



79 (n) One (1) employee of a community college counseling
80 center, or a person responsible for coordinating or providing
81 student mental health services on campus, appointed by the
82 Lieutenant Governor;

83 (o) One (1) school nurse employed in a Mississippi
84 public school to be appointed by the Superintendent of Education;

85 (p) One (1) employee of a non-profit provider of mental
86 and behavioral health services to youth, appointed by the
87 Lieutenant Governor; and

88 (q) One (1) employee of a community mental health
89 provider that provides services to a Mississippi public school
90 school, appointed by the Governor.

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

95 (a) Collect and analyze publicly available data and
96 statistics related to the current state of student mental health,
97 K-12 through the community college and university level;

98 (b) Explore the impact of trauma and mental health
99 issues on student behavior, dropout and graduation rates, academic
100 achievement, employment and related issues;

101 (c) Evaluate currently available resources for
102 addressing student mental health including, but not limited to,



103 partnerships with nonprofits or experts, telehealth opportunities,
104 inpatient and outpatient resources;

105 (d) Review mental health training and professional
106 development provided to K-12 school personnel and school personnel
107 at community colleges and universities for classroom management,
108 identification, referral, intervention and prevention;

109 (e) Evaluate successful strategies for addressing
110 challenges in student mental health in Mississippi and across the
111 nation;

112 (f) Review the current workforce landscapes as it
113 relates to psychologists, nurses, counselors, behavior
114 interventionists and others who work in schools, community
115 colleges and universities, and consider strategies to recruit
116 sufficient personnel if there are workforce strategies; and

117 (g) Review any other matters related to the above
118 issues or student mental health in Mississippi.

119 (4) The task force may request the assistance of the
120 Mississippi Department of Education, Mississippi Community College
121 Board, Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, Mississippi
122 Department of Health, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health,
123 the University of Mississippi School of Medicine; the Mississippi
124 Division of Medicaid or any other related agency, entity or
125 organization with expertise in student mental health issues and
126 services.



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

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

143 **SECTION 2.** (1) To complete the work it commenced in 2023,
144 the Early Intervention Task Force created by Chapter 487, Laws of
145 2023, and dissolved December 1, 2023, is hereby reconstituted to
146 serve in an advisory capacity to assist the state agency
147 coordinating Part C of IDEA in implementing a new service delivery
148 model. The goal of the task force shall be to collaborate with
149 the state agency coordinating Part C of IDEA to design a new
150 service delivery model and make changes to the Early Intervention
151 Program.



152 (2) The members of the task force shall be as follows:

153 (a) The Chairmen of the Education Committees of the
154 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
155 or their designee from their respective committee membership;

156 (b) The Chairmen of the Appropriations Committees of
157 the Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of
158 Representatives, or their designee from their respective committee
159 membership;

160 (c) The Chairmen of the Public Health Committees of the
161 Mississippi Senate and the Mississippi House of Representatives,
162 or their designee from their respective committee membership;

163 (d) One (1) member of the Mississippi State Senate, to
164 be named by the Lieutenant Governor; and one (1) member of the
165 Mississippi House of Representatives, to be named by the Speaker
166 of the House of Representatives, who are interested in early
167 intervention issues;

168 (e) The State Health Officer of the Mississippi
169 Department of Health or a designated deputy;

170 (f) One (1) designee who is a direct service provider
171 in the First Steps Early Intervention Program, to be named by the
172 State Health Officer;

173 (g) One (1) faculty member from the Social Science
174 Research Center (SSRC) at Mississippi State University, to be
175 named by the Director of the SSRC;



176 (h) One (1) developmental-behavioral pediatrician with
177 expertise in early childhood systems building, to be named by the
178 Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical Center;

179 (i) One (1) general pediatrician, to be named by the
180 Mississippi Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics;

181 (j) One (1) clinical psychologist with expertise in
182 social-emotional health of infants and toddlers, to be named by
183 the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical
184 Center;

185 (k) One (1) school psychologist employed by a school
186 district, to be named by the Mississippi Association of
187 Psychologists in the Schools;

188 (l) One (1) early interventionist/development
189 therapist, to be named by the State Health Officer;

190 (m) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Early
191 Learning Alliance;

192 (n) One (1) family advocacy representative to be
193 appointed by the Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition
194 for Citizens with Disabilities;

195 (o) One (1) parent representative with current
196 experience with early intervention to be appointed by the
197 Executive Director of the Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with
198 Disabilities;



199 (p) One (1) faculty member from the College of Health
200 Sciences at Jackson State University, to be named by the president
201 of such university;

202 (q) One (1) pediatrician, to be named by the
203 Mississippi Region of the National Medical Association;

204 (r) The Executive Director of the Division of Medicaid,
205 Office of the Governor, or the executive director's designee; and

206 (s) The Director of the State Department of Education's
207 Early Childhood Education Office, or such director's designee.

208 (3) A faculty member from each of the universities within
209 the institutions of higher learning with an early childhood
210 development program or early intervention program may be named by
211 the president of each university to assist the task force. In
212 addition, the Executive Director of the Center for Mississippi
213 Health Policy shall aid the task force.

214 (4) The task force shall meet within forty-five (45) days of
215 the effective date of this act and shall commence its
216 responsibilities set out in subsection (5) of this section.

217 (5) Specifically, in collaboration with the state agency
218 coordinating Part C of IDEA, the task force shall:

219 (a) Review billing and reimbursement processes and
220 rates for early intervention services in Mississippi and in other
221 states, to ensure a timely receipt of payment to providers. In
222 performing this function, a recommendation shall be made to the
223 Legislature by January 1, 2025, on a more efficient system for



224 providing compensation to providers and for billing and collecting
225 from third-party payors;

226 (b) Evaluate early intervention service delivery
227 models, including a hub or hybrid model involving university
228 participation and determine how this model may impact the training
229 of students and delivery of services to members of the eligible
230 population. In performing this function, a recommendation shall
231 be made to the Legislature that will offer a service delivery
232 structure to enhance the efficient and effective delivery of
233 quality services to the eligible population; and

234 (c) Review any other matters related to the above
235 issues or related to early intervention services.

236 (6) The state agency coordinating Part C of IDEA and the
237 task force may request the assistance of the Social Science
238 Research Center at Mississippi State University, the Mississippi
239 Early Learning Alliance or any other related entity or
240 organization with expertise in early intervention services.

241 (7) The members of the task force shall elect a chair from
242 among the members. The task force shall develop and report its
243 findings and recommendations for proposed legislation to the
244 Legislature in response to the proposal of the state agency
245 coordinating Part C of IDEA to make changes to the service
246 delivery structure for the program and changes to the way the
247 state pays service providers and recoups payments from third-party
248 payors, which shall be due to the task force and Legislature by



249 December 1, 2024. A quorum of the membership shall be required to
250 approve any final report and recommendation. Members of the task
251 force shall be reimbursed for necessary travel expense in the same
252 manner as public employees are reimbursed for official duties from
253 any available funds, and members of the Legislature shall be
254 reimbursed in the same manner as for attending out-of-session
255 committee meetings.

256 (8) The Joint Legislative Committee on Performance
257 Evaluation and Expenditure Review shall provide necessary clerical
258 support for the meetings of the task force and research support as
259 needed for the preparation of the report. Proposed legislation
260 shall be prepared by the Legislative Services Offices of the
261 Senate and House as requested.

262 (9) The task force shall be dissolved upon presentation of
263 its report.

264 **SECTION 3.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
265 and after its passage.

