

By: Representative Creekmore IV

To: Judiciary B

HOUSE BILL NO. 571

1 AN ACT TO CREATE THE CRIME OF CHILD GROOMING; TO PROVIDE
2 PENALTIES FOR THE CRIME; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

4 **SECTION 1.** (1) A person commits the crime of child grooming
5 if, with the intent to commit any sex offense as defined in
6 Section 45-33-23 against a minor, the occurrence of which would
7 subject the person to criminal liability, the person knowingly
8 persuades, induces, entices, or coerces, or attempts to persuade,
9 induce, entice, or coerce, a child younger than eighteen (18)
10 years of age to engage in specific conduct that, under the
11 circumstances surrounding the offender's conduct as the actor
12 believes them to be, would:

13 (a) Constitute a sex offense as defined in Section
14 45-33-23 involving sexual activity the occurrence of which would
15 subject the person to criminal liability under state federal law;
16 or

17 (b) Make the child a party to the commission of an
18 offense described in Section 45-33-23.

19 (2) Upon conviction for the crime of child grooming, the
20 offender shall be sentenced as follows:

21 (a) If eighteen (18) years of age or older, but under
22 twenty-one (21) years of age, to imprisonment for not more than
23 one (1) year in the custody of the Mississippi Department of
24 Corrections or a fine of not more than One Thousand Dollars
25 (\$1,000.00), or both;

26 (b) If twenty-one (21) years of age or older and
27 convicted, to imprisonment of not more five (5) years in the
28 custody of the Mississippi Department of Corrections or a fine of
29 not more than Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00), or both, for the
30 first offense, and not more than ten (10) years in the custody of
31 the Mississippi Department of Corrections for each subsequent
32 offense;

33 (3) It is an affirmative defense to prosecution under this
34 section that the actor is under the age of eighteen (18) and:

35 (a) The actor engaged in conduct described in
36 subsection (1) with another child under the age of eighteen (18)
37 who is not more than three (3) years older or younger than the
38 actor and with whom the actor had a dating relationship at the
39 time of the offense; or

40 (b) Who was the spouse of the person at the time of the
41 offense; and

42 (c) The conduct occurred only between the person and
43 the other child described in subsection (1).

44 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
45 and after July 1, 2025.