By: Representative Roberson

To: Education

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE
FOR
HOUSE BILL NO. 1431

AN ACT TO CREATE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY AND JOINDER TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE URGENT NEED OF PROVIDING HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND OPPORTUNITIES TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI; TO PROVIDE FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE TASK FORCE AND SPECIFY ITS PURPOSE AND DUTIES; TO SPECIFY CERTAIN DATA THAT MUST BE COMPILED IN A REPORT ON THE STUDY WHICH MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE LEGISLATURE BEFORE DECEMBER 31, 2025; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

**SECTION 1.** (1) There is hereby created the School District Administrative Efficiency and Joinder Task Force to study the urgent need of providing holistic educational efficiency and opportunities to school districts throughout the State of Mississippi, with particular emphasis on evaluation and assessments in those counties having two (2) or more school districts situated therein and those school districts whose boundaries are situated within two (2) counties, for the purpose of determining how to substantially reduce the number of school districts within the state.

(2) (a) The task force shall consist of the following fifteen (15) members:

(i) The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the House Education Committee;

(ii) The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Senate Education Committee;

(iii) The Chairman of the House Accountability, Efficiency, Transparency Committee;

(iv) The Chairman of the Senate Accountability, Efficiency, Transparency Committee;

(v) The Chairman of the House State Affairs Committee;

(vi) A member of the Mississippi Senate, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor;

(vii) The State Superintendent of Public Education, or his or her designee;

(viii) Three (3) members of the Standing Commission on School District Efficiency, to be appointed by the State Board Education, with one (1) being selected from each Mississippi Supreme Court District;

(ix) The Commissioner of Higher Education, or his or her appointee;

(x) The Executive Director of the Mississippi Community College Board, or his or her appointee; and

(xi) The Commissioner of Revenue, or his or her appointee.

(b) The Chairman of the House Education Committee and the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee shall serve as co-chairs of the task force, who shall jointly convene the first meeting of the task force within twenty (20) days of the effective date of this act, and at said meeting, shall elect any additional officers from among its membership deemed necessary for the efficient discharge of the task force's duties.

(3) The task force shall adopt rules and regulations governing times and places for meetings and governing the manner of conducting its business. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of conducting any business of the task force, and a majority vote of all members present shall be required for any recommendations to the Legislature.

(4) (a) Using existing staff of the State Department of Education, the task force shall compile the most recent data available which reflects the following:

(i) The total public school student population for the entire State of Mississippi;

(ii) The total number of students enrolled in the public school system in each county;

(iii) The names of each school district situated within each county, the total number of students enrolled in those school districts and the net enrollment of students in those school districts;

(iv) The total and per pupil administrative costs of each school district, using the same funds, functions and objects that the department is required to use under Section 37-151-203(1)(d) in the annual determination of the base student cost under the Mississippi Student Funding Formula;

(v) The density classifications of each school district required under Section 3-151-85 for purposes of determining the district's transportation costs using the scale of allowable costs developed by the department;

(vi) The total number of sparsely populated districts, as defined under Section 37-151-201, in the state;

(vii) The accreditation level of each school district; and

(viii) Such other objective information that may be deemed relevant by the task force in addressing the issue of the holistic educational efficiency and opportunities of school districts.

(b) The information gathered by the task force under this subsection shall be compiled and presented, by county, in a user friendly format that easily allows for comparisons to be made between school districts under each category of information.

(5) In addition to the data compiled under subsection (1) of this section, the task force shall include the following information:

(a) An in-depth analysis of all matters that must be considered in determining whether or not reducing the number of school districts in the state would be feasible or advantageous;

(b) A list of the benefits and disadvantages of reducing or not reducing the number of school districts in each specific county having two (2) or more school districts;

(c) A projection of the most feasible minimum size of a school district which is capable of promoting a wholesome educational experience, complete with advanced placement courses, athletics and other extracurricular activities;

(d) A projection of the savings in state and local funding which would be achieved through the consolidation of school districts in each specific county having two (2) or more school districts; and

(e) A recommended procedure to accomplish the consolidation of school districts in each specific county having two (2) or more school districts and a reasonable time frame in which the consolidation could be achieved.

(6) In order to quantify and affirm the number of school districts necessary within the state, if determined that single county school districts are not in the best interest of the children and families of this state, the department shall use the following criterion:

(a) An assessment of the largest school districts in the state;

(b) An assessment of the smallest school districts in the state;

(c) An assessment of previously consolidated school districts in counties having two (2) or more districts;

(d) An assessment of school districts whose boundaries are situated within two (2) counties;

(e) The administrative, operational and programs of instruction and curriculum of those schools accredited at the highest and lowest levels of performance on the accreditation rating scale;

(f) The socio-economic demographics of each district with greater populations of at-risk students; and

(g) Levels of social, economic, academic and cultural exposure.

(7) The task force shall cause the State Department of Education to prepare a written report on the study which includes, at a minimum, the data and information specified under subsections (4), (5) and (6) of this section. The report must be presented to the Legislature and the Governor before December 31, 2025.

**SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.