

By: Representatives Felsher, Zuber

To: Rules

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 32

1 A RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND RECOGNIZING THE 14 MIDDLE AND  
2 HIGH SCHOOL HOPE SQUADS IN JACKSON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI, WHICH  
3 FOSTER HUMAN CONNECTION, COMMUNITY, AND HOPE BY ELEVATING MENTAL  
4 WELL-BEING THROUGH PEER-TO-PEER SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMMING.

5 WHEREAS, we join the citizens of Jackson County, Mississippi,  
6 and the entire state in commending the middle and high school Hope  
7 Squad advisors and student members for their laudable work to  
8 ensure all seven public middle schools and seven public high  
9 schools follow the Hope Squad curriculum in creating a culture of  
10 inclusivity and kindness; and

11 WHEREAS, in 2023, teen suicide attempt survivor and national  
12 speaker, Emma Benoit, introduced Hope Squad to the Singing River  
13 Health Foundation and Jackson County Chamber of Commerce, which  
14 had been collaboratively seeking communal initiatives to improve  
15 mental health awareness and access, especially in teenagers, since  
16 the 2022 suicide death of East Central eighth grader, Sawyer  
17 Magee, as an evidence-based curriculum guided by school advisors  
18 and led by students; and



19           WHEREAS, the Superintendents from Jackson County's four  
20 school districts: Jackson County, Moss Point, Ocean Springs and  
21 Pascagoula-Gautier, along with a cadre of their counselors and  
22 educators, returned from their investigatory visit with Hope  
23 Squads at schools in the Florida Panhandle, accepting Singing  
24 River Health Foundation's offer to fund local Hope Squads, along  
25 with Chevron, Ingalls Shipbuilding, Mississippi Power, Merchants  
26 and Marine Bank, and Navigator Credit Union; and

27           WHEREAS, the 14 Hope Squads in Jackson County consist of 203  
28 middle and high school students who were nominated by their peers  
29 for their kind, inclusive, and trustworthy reputations, and  
30 trained in QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer), the nationally  
31 recognized suicide prevention method and receive ongoing  
32 skill-building lessons; and

33           WHEREAS, the Hope Squads' peer-to-peer approach empowers the  
34 203 members across Jackson County to intentionally reach out to  
35 peers and become instruments of change, also creating school-wide  
36 activities, such as Hope 'Grams, Hope Chains, Hope Trees, festival  
37 booths, Cultivating Calmness events and World Kindness Day  
38 recognition; and

39           WHEREAS, multiple research studies and articles indicate the  
40 significance of peer-to-peer methodology as a worthwhile approach  
41 to addressing documented increased levels of anxiety, depression,  
42 and hopelessness related to technology use and the impact of  
43 COVID-19 among teenagers; and



44 WHEREAS, the K-12 and Postsecondary Mental Health Task Force,  
45 composed of legislators, state officials, mental health and  
46 education professionals and one student, released an October 2024  
47 report recommending the implementation of pilot peer-to-peer  
48 programs to help students deal with trauma and promote mental  
49 health wellness at the high school, community college, and  
50 university levels with appropriate oversight from personnel  
51 including administrators and mental health professionals; and

52 WHEREAS, the Hope Squad program is a model that reflects  
53 strong community support from its nonprofit and private sector  
54 partners who support the students and their Hope Squad activities;  
55 and

56 WHEREAS, the Hope Squads include four district coordinators,  
57 14 school advisors, and 203 students, all passionate about mental  
58 health and well-being, from Colmer Middle School, East Central  
59 Middle School, East Central High School, Gautier Middle School,  
60 Gautier High School, Magnolia Middle School, Moss Point High  
61 School, Ocean Springs Middle School, Ocean Springs High School,  
62 Pascagoula High School, St. Martin Middle School, St. Martin High  
63 School, Vancleave Middle School and Vancleave High School; and

64 WHEREAS, the Hope Squad program is an exemplary initiative  
65 that can serve as a model as the Legislature considers expanding  
66 peer-to-peer suicide prevention programs across the state:

67 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
68 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we commend and



69 recognize the Singing River Health Foundation and the 14 Hope  
70 Squads in middle and high schools across Jackson County,  
71 Mississippi, their outstanding advisors, student members, and  
72 community partners for their work providing hopeful environments  
73 and encouraging healthy connections among themselves and across  
74 their communities.

75 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be furnished to  
76 the Singing River Health Foundation Executive Director Laura  
77 Sessum and her colleagues and partners, and to the members of the  
78 Capitol Press Corps.

