

Chapter No. 330  
10/HR03/R1574PH  
job 1 of 2

***HOUSE BILL NO. 1056***

Originated in House Don Richardson Clerk

HOUSE BILL NO. 1056

AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-161-3, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO SELECT PRIVATE PROVIDERS, OVERSEEN BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TO ADMINISTER, MANAGE OR OPERATE VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAMS, INCLUDING TOTAL OPERATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI VIRTUAL PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAM, AND TO REVISE THE PERIOD OF TIME WITHIN WHICH THE PROGRAM MUST BE EVALUATED TO EVERY THREE YEARS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

**SECTION 1.** Section 37-161-3, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

37-161-3. (1) The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) Meeting the educational needs of children in our state's schools is of the greatest importance to the future welfare of the State of Mississippi;

(b) Closing the achievement gap between high-performing students, including the achievement gap among at-risk students, is a significant and present challenge;

(c) Providing a broader range of educational options to parents and utilizing existing resources, along with technology, may help students in the state improve their academic achievement; and

(d) Many of the state's school districts currently lack the capacity to provide other public school choices for students whose schools are low performing.

(2) There is created the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program, which is the responsibility of the State Department of Education. It is the intent of the Legislature that the Mississippi Virtual Public School established under this section

provide Mississippi families with an alternative choice to access additional educational resources in an effort to improve academic achievement. The Mississippi Virtual Public School must be recognized as a public school and provide equitable treatment and resources as are other public schools in the state. Private providers, overseen by the State Department of Education, may be selected by the State Board of Education to administer, manage or operate virtual school programs in this state, including the total operation of the Mississippi Virtual Public School Program. Any private provider chosen to provide services under the provisions of this subsection shall be chosen through a competitive RFP process.

(3) Nothing in this section may be interpreted as precluding the use of computer- and Internet-based instruction for students in a virtual or remote setting utilizing the Mississippi Virtual Public School.

(4) As used in this section, the following words and phrases have the meanings respectively ascribed unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

(a) "Mississippi Virtual Public School" means a public school in which the state uses technology in order to deliver instruction to students via the Internet in a virtual or remote setting.

(b) "Sponsor" means the public school district is responsible for the academic process for each student including, but not limited to, enrollment, awarding of credit and monitoring progress.

(5) (a) The State Board of Education shall establish the Mississippi Virtual Public School beginning in school year 2006-2007.

(b) Students who enroll in the Mississippi Virtual Public School may reside anywhere in the State of Mississippi.

(6) The Mississippi Virtual Public School must be evaluated every three (3) years according to the following criteria:

(a) The accountability and viability of the Mississippi Virtual Public School, as demonstrated by its academic, fiscal and operational performance.

(b) The access of each student in the Mississippi Virtual Public School to a sequential curriculum that meets or exceeds the state's academic standards and which has an interactive program with significant online components.

(c) Whether or not each student achieves the required number of hours of learning opportunities prescribed by each course per academic year, or alternatively, has demonstrated mastery or completion of appropriate subject areas.

(7) Subject to appropriation, the Mississippi Virtual Public School shall provide to each student enrolled in the school all necessary instructional materials. Subject to appropriation, the sponsored school must ensure that each student is provided access to the necessary technology, such as a computer and printer, and to an Internet connection for school work purposes.

(8) The State Board of Education shall have approval authority for all coursework and policy of the Mississippi Virtual Public School.

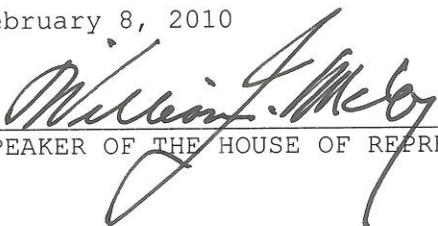
(9) Each teacher employed by or participating in the delivery of instruction through the Mississippi Virtual Public School must meet all qualifications for licensure in the State of Mississippi.

(10) Any student who meets state residency requirements may enroll in the Mississippi Virtual Public School.

(11) Enrollment in the Mississippi Virtual Public School must be free of charge to students. The costs associated with the operations of the virtual school must be shared by the State Department of Education, subject to appropriation, and/or the local school districts.

**SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2010.

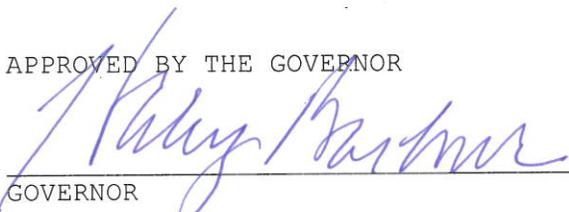
PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
February 8, 2010

  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PASSED BY THE SENATE  
March 4, 2010

  
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR

  
GOVERNOR  
3/15/10 12:13p