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Chapter No. 370

11/HR12/R1421CS

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HOUSE BILL NO. 1125

Originated in House Don Richardson Clerk

HOUSE BILL NO. 1125

AN ACT TO CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI AUTISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE; TO PROVIDE FOR THE MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE; TO SET FORTH THE DUTIES OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, autism is a complex developmental disability that typically appears during the first three (3) years of life and is part of a group of disorders known as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD); and

WHEREAS, as of the effective date of this act, at least one (1) in one hundred (100) individuals in the United States is diagnosed with autism, making it more common than the occurrences in our population of pediatric cancer, diabetes and AIDS combined; and

WHEREAS, autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others; is associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines; is four (4) times more likely to strike boys than girls; and occurs in all racial, ethnic and social groups; and

WHEREAS, symptoms of the disability can range from very mild to quite severe, and autistic behaviors not only make life difficult for those individuals who suffer from the disability, but also make life hard for their families, health care providers and teachers; and

WHEREAS, families coping with this devastating illness are struggling with the state's education and medical systems to adequately educate and treat their children; and

WHEREAS, there is no known means to prevent the disability; there are indications that early intervention in an appropriate educational setting for at least two (2) years during the preschool years can result in significant improvements for many young children with the disorder; and

WHEREAS, statistically, there is an extreme under identification of children with autism; and

WHEREAS, employment opportunities for individuals with ASD need to be identified; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi Legislature recognizes that strategies for how to best identify, treat, educate, accommodate and employ individuals with autism and assist their families are urgently needed in our state; NOW, THEREFORE,

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

SECTION 1. The Mississippi Autism Advisory Committee is created to study, make recommendations and develop a strategic plan on how best to educate and train students with autism or ASD to maximize their potential productivity with the workforce. The committee shall meet at least six (6) times annually, and shall develop an annual plan. The report and plan of the committee, which shall be due annually on July 1, 2011, to the Mississippi Legislature, shall detail the progress and problems in creating meaningful progress in the areas of mental health, education, medical and employment for individuals with autism or ASD and their families.

SECTION 2. Members of the advisory committee shall be composed of the following:

(a) Five (5) persons who are the parents of children with autism or ASD, with one (1) such person to be appointed by the Governor, two (2) to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, and two (2) to be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(b) One (1) person who is a member of the governing body of a school district, to be appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Education;

(c) The State Superintendent of Public Education or the Associate Superintendent of the Office of Special Education;

(d) One (1) person who is the director of special education services in a school district, to be appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Education;

(e) Two (2) members of the Mississippi Special Education Advisory Committee, to be selected by the committee;

(f) Two (2) educators or behavioral specialists who work directly with students with ASD, to be appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Education;

(g) Two (2) Mississippi licensed psychologists who perform evaluation or consultation with Mississippi schools, to be appointed by the Mississippi Association of Psychology in the Schools;

(h) The project director of the Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center;

(i) Two (2) persons who are representatives of autism advocacy groups or professionals who work with the advocacy groups and provide services to individuals with autism or ASD, to be appointed by the Executive Director of the Department of Mental Health;

(j) One (1) person who is a representative of the State Department of Mental Health, to be appointed by the executive director of the department;

(k) One (1) person who is a representative of a private mental health facility who provides services to youth with ASD, to be appointed by the Executive Director of the State Department of Mental Health;

(l) One (1) person who is a representative of the University of Mississippi Medical Center and who provides medical

or other services to individuals with autism or ASD, to be appointed by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Mississippi Medical Center;

(m) Two (2) persons who are working in private industry whose business has the potential to employ individuals with autism, to be appointed by the Governor;

(n) One (1) person who is a Transition Specialist, to be appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Education;

(o) One (1) representative of the T.K. Martin Center, to be appointed by the Director of the T.K. Martin Center;

(p) One (1) representative of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services;

(q) Two (2) persons who are licensed therapists, to be appointed by the President of the Mississippi Speech Language and Hearing Association;

(r) One (1) person who is a representative of the Mississippi Department of Insurance, to be appointed by the commissioner; and

(s) One (1) person who is a representative of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, to be appointed by the director of the department.

SECTION 3. (1) The advisory committee shall:

(a) Review the recommendations of the Caring for Individuals with Autism Task Force of 2007;

(b) Evaluate, study and identify any and all current relevant information and make legislative recommendations regarding the development and implementation of a continuum of educational and medical services for individuals with autism or ASD; and

(c) File a report with those standing committees of the Mississippi Legislature and present the report to those state agencies having jurisdiction over specific recommendations of the task force, not later than July 1 of each year.

(2) The advisory committee shall hold its first meeting not later than April 1, 2011, with the date, time and location of the meeting to be designated by the Executive Director of the Department of Mental Health. At that first meeting, the advisory committee shall elect from among its membership a chairman, vice chairman and any other officers determined to be necessary, and shall set the date, time and location of its next meeting.

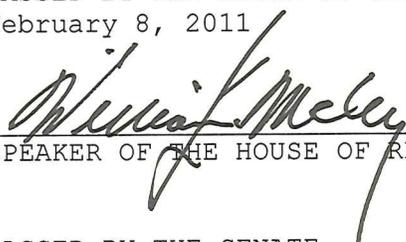
(3) The terms of advisory committee members shall run for two (2) years, concurrent with the term of members of the Mississippi Congressional Delegation elected to the United States House of Representatives.

(4) The State Department of Mental Health shall provide the staff and other support necessary for the Mississippi Autism Advisory Committee to perform its duties.

(5) Members of the advisory committee shall serve without compensation in the form of a per diem or any other expense for service on the committee.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
February 8, 2011



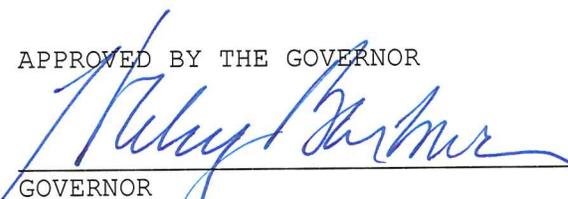
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PASSED BY THE SENATE
March 2, 2011



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR



GOVERNOR
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