

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Office of the Governor



April 16, 2013

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE MISSISSIPPI STATE SENATE:

GOVERNOR'S SIGNING STATEMENT FOR SENATE BILL 2395

I am signing Senate Bill 2395, "AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE AND DIRECT THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO IMPLEMENT A PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI ON A PHASED-IN BASIS; TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-51, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO TRANSFER THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES RELATIVE TO THE "EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT" TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, TO REDESIGNATE THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM AS THE "EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT OF 2013," TO COMMIT FUNDING OF THE "EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT OF 2013" ON A PHASED-IN BASIS; TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-53, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO DESIGNATE THE STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL (SECAC) IN THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR TO ASSIST THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN IMPLEMENTING THE "EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT OF 2013" PURSUANT TO FEDERAL LAW; TO AMEND SECTION 37-7-301, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO AUTHORIZE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO IMPLEMENT THE "EARLY LEARNING COLLABORATIVE ACT OF 2013"; TO AMEND SECTIONS 37-21-3 AND 37-21-5, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS FOR STATE OR FEDERAL FUNDED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM PERSONNEL; TO PROVIDE FOR A STATE INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO QUALIFIED PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS; TO REPEAL SECTION 37-21-55, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH ESTABLISHES THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES";

Senate Bill 2395 establishes a voluntary pilot program for public, private, and parochial schools serving pre-kindergarten age children in Mississippi. The bill provides \$3,000,000 for the first year pilot study in five to eight communities. Parental and family involvement is essential to the success of any child and, hence, to the success of any prekindergarten initiative. If parents and families are not intimately involved in the program, it will fail. Put simply, the State cannot fulfill parents' responsibilities to their children, and expansion of the public education system will not, in and of itself, improve educational outcomes. Therefore, in order to justify future funding, the program should demonstrate not only quantifiable improvement in student achievement but also success in involving parents and families in their children's education. I intend to work with Senate and House leadership to ensure that this will not expand into universal PreK in Public Schools and that any future funding is based on evidence that this initiative is having a positive impact on students and parents.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Bryant  
Governor