

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Governor Musgrove Announces Partnership Between DHS, Barksdale Reading Institute**

(Jackson, MS) – Governor Ronnie Musgrove announced today that the Department of Human Services is joining forces with the Barksdale Reading Institute to fund an 18-month statewide study of child care in Mississippi. DHS will provide \$375,000 in Child Care Development Funds to match \$125,000 from the Barksdale Reading Institute.

Musgrove was joined by Claiborne Barksdale, chief executive officer of the Institute.

“The commitment we make to early childhood education will determine the success of the next generation of leaders for our state, and today we’re showing the strength of that commitment,” Musgrove said. “This study will serve as a blueprint for improving the readiness of our children to learn.”

Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan of Yale University will conduct the study, along with Richard Brandon of the University of Washington’s Human Services Policy Center. The Early Childhood Institute, located at Mississippi State University, will provide support services for the study. Kagan’s research will focus on evaluating what child care services exist, what federal and state funds may be available to support an enhanced child care system, and what the public is looking for in child care.

Barksdale stressed the importance of reaching children at an early age.

“Too many children from impoverished families reach kindergarten at age 5 with significant vocabulary deficits,” said Barksdale. “Overcoming those deficits is a Herculean task that all too often cannot be accomplished by our public schools. The children start behind and, too often, they stay behind.”

“By partnering together on this issue, we can develop a system of early care and education to address the unique needs of our children, and help build a stronger Mississippi,” Musgrove said.

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