Chapter No. 2077
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EH / AM

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 105

Originated in House _____ Clerk

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 105

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING THE EXCEPTIONAL WORKS OF THE MISSISSIPPI ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION ON ITS 12TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY AND DECLARING THE MONTH OF JUNE 2018 AS ACCESS TO JUSTICE MONTH IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI.

WHEREAS, created by the Mississippi Supreme Court on June 28, 2006, the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission, which was organized to develop a unified strategy to improve access to the civil courts for the poor, will celebrate the 12-year anniversary of its establishment throughout the month of June 2018, which is designated Mississippi Access to Justice Month in the State of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, tasked to investigate the need for civil legal services to the poor in Mississippi, and to evaluate, develop and recommend policies, programs and initiatives which will assist the judiciary in meeting needs for civil legal services to the poor, the Access to Justice Commission is empowered to accomplish the following goals: to identify the current and future needs of the legal services community in providing access to justice to the

poor in Mississippi; to develop and establish a strategic statewide plan for the delivery of legal services to the poor in Mississippi; to develop strategies and ideas to increase resources and funding for access to justice in civil legal matters and make recommendations to appropriate entities to ensure that the resources and funding are applied to the areas and organizations of greatest need; to work to maximize the wise and efficient use of available resources, including development of local, regional and/or statewide systems that encourage the coordination of resources and funding; to develop and implement initiatives designed to expand civil access to justice; to work to reduce barriers to the justice system by addressing existing and proposed court rules, procedures and policies that affect access to justice for poor Mississippians; and to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the statewide system and services provided and periodically evaluate the progress made in fulfilling their respective responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, with approximately 695,000 people, which account for roughly a fifth of the state's population, living at or below poverty level, these individuals represent a smaller demographic of 1.3 million of the state's impoverished and working poor who qualify for civil legal aid; and

WHEREAS, with only one Legal Services lawyer for every 21,000 eligible people, more than half of those seeking assistance from Legal Services in Mississippi are turned away and struggle to

represent themselves *pro se* in court with assistance of counsel, while others remain to have their matters heard at all; and

WHEREAS, the collaborative efforts of the Access to Justice Commission, the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, chancellors, local bar associations, law students and community organizations have worked to provide free family law clinics to help meet the civil legal needs of low socioeconomic status; and

WHEREAS, periodic legal clinics staffed by volunteer lawyers have been developed as an effective means of providing assistance to low-income people, as well as *Pro Se* Days, which have been conducted in the 1st Chancery District, the 3rd Chancery District, the 5th Chancery District, the 9th Chancery District, the 10th Chancery District, the 11th Chancery District and in the 20th Chancery District; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to increase the availability of civil legal assistance, the Access to Justice Commission of the Mississippi Supreme Court is working to organize *Pro Se* clinics in every county in the state, with numerous civil legal clinics scheduled in June 2018 and afterwards across the state that will address family law matters and guardianships; and

WHEREAS, it is the policy of this Legislature to highlight the efforts of all such organizations as the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission which strives to make a difference in justice for one, for all:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commend and congratulate the exceptional works of the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission on its 12-year anniversary and declare the month of June 2018 as Access to Justice Month in the State of Mississippi, and encourage its citizens to participate in observance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be furnished to the Mississippi Access to Justice Commission of the Supreme Court and to the members of the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 27, 2018

Philip Gunn

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE
March 27, 2018

Tate Reeves

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE