MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2021

By: Representative Zuber

To: Accountability, Efficiency, Transparency

HOUSE BILL NO. 272

AN ACT TO REVISE THE MISSISSIPPI ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2008; TO AMEND SECTION 27-104-153, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO REVISE THE DEFINITION OF "AGENCY" TO INCLUDE COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES; TO AMEND SECTION 27-104-155, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROVIDE THAT BY JULY 1, 2022, EACH COUNTY WITH A POPULATION OF 80,000 OR GREATER AND EACH MUNICIPALITY WITH A POPULATION OF 10,000 OR GREATER SHALL CREATE AND MAINTAIN AN ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY WEBSITE FOR THE COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY OR SET UP A SEPARATE SECTION FOR THE COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY ON THE COUNTY'S OR MUNICIPALITY'S CURRENT WEBSITE; TO AMEND SECTION 27-104-163, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO CONFORM TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; TO BRING FORWARD SECTIONS 27-104-161, 27-104-103 AND 7-7-211, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, FOR THE PURPOSE OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENT; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. Section 27-104-153, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

27-104-153. As used in Sections 27-104-151 through 27-104-159:

(a) "Searchable website" means an Internet site that:

(i) Allows the public to access information identified in Sections 27-104-151 through 27-104-159 without any fee or charge to the public for that access;

(ii) Provides keyword or other efficient search capability to support the public's ability to find, aggregate and display that information with reasonable ease by accessing a single website; and

(iii) Allows the public to programmatically search and access all data in a serialized machine readable format, such as XML, via a Web-services application programming interface.

(b) "Agency" means a state agency, department, institution, board, commission, council, office, bureau, division, committee or subcommittee of the state. The term "agency" includes individual agencies and programs as well as multiple agencies whenever programs and activities involve more than one (1) agency. The term "agency" includes all elective offices in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of state government. *** * ***

(c) "Entity" or "recipient" means a corporation, association, union, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, grantee, contractor, county, municipality or other local government entity, or any other legal business entity, including a nonprofit entity. The term "entity" or "recipient" does not include an individual recipient of state public assistance.

(d) "Expenditure of state funds" means the disbursement or transfer of any funds, from any source or funds, whether appropriated or nonappropriated, from any agency. The term

"expenditure of state funds" includes the expenditures from bond proceeds.

(e) "Funding action" means the transfer of funds from a state agency to another entity for a specific purpose. These would include subgranting of funds for specific purposes or the funding through bonds or other authority specific projects and actions.

(f) "Funding source" means the state account against which an expenditure is recorded.

(g) "State audit or report" means any audit or report issued by the State Auditor, Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER) or an executive body relating to the entity or recipient of funds or to the budget program or activity or agency.

SECTION 2. Section 27-104-155, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

27-104-155. (1) The Department of Finance and Administration shall develop and operate a searchable website that includes information on expenditures of state funds from all funding sources. The website shall have a unique and simplified website address, and the department shall require each agency that maintains a generally accessible Internet site or for which a generally accessible Internet site is maintained to include a link on the front page of the agency's Internet site to the searchable website required under this section.

(a) With regard to disbursement of funds, the website shall include, but not be limited to:

(i) The name and principal location of the entity or recipients of the funds, excluding release of information relating to an individual's place of residence, the identity of recipients of state or federal assistance payments, and any other information deemed confidential by state or federal law relating to privacy rights;

(ii) The amount of state funds expended;

(iii) A descriptive purpose of the funding action or expenditure;

(iv) The funding source of the expenditure;

(v) The budget program or activity of the expenditure;

(vi) The specific source of authority and descriptive purpose of the expenditure, to include a link to the funding authorization document(s) in a searchable PDF form;

(vii) The specific source of authority for the expenditure including, but not limited to, a grant, subgrant, contract, or the general discretion of the agency director, provided that if the authority is a grant, subgrant or contract, the website entry shall include a grant, subgrant or contract number or similar information that clearly identifies the specific source of authority. The information required under this paragraph includes data relative to tax exemptions and credits;

(viii) The expending agency;

(ix) The type of transaction;

(x) The expected performance outcomes achieved for the funding action or expenditure;

(xi) Links to any state audit or report relating to the entity or recipient of funds or the budget program or activity or agency; and

(xii) Any other information deemed relevant by the Department of Finance and Administration.

(b) When the expenditure of state funds involves the expenditure of bond proceeds, the searchable website must include a clear, detailed description of the purpose of the bonds, a current status report on the project or projects being financed by the bonds, and a current status report on the payment of the principal and interest on the bonds.

(c) The searchable website must include access to an electronic summary of each grant, including amendments; subgrant, including amendments; contract, including amendments; and payment voucher that includes, wherever possible, a hyperlink to the actual document in a searchable PDF format, subject to the restrictions in paragraph (d) of this *** * *** subsection. The Department of Finance and Administration may cooperate with other agencies to accomplish the requirements of this paragraph.

(d) Nothing in Sections 27-104-151 through 27-104-159 shall permit or require the disclosure of trade secrets or other

proprietary information, including confidential vendor information, or any other information that is required to be confidential by state or federal law.

(e) The information available from the searchable website must be updated no later than fourteen (14) days after the receipt of data from an agency, and the Department of Finance and Administration shall require each agency to provide to the department access to all data that is required to be accessible from the searchable website within fourteen (14) days of each expenditure, grant award, including amendments; subgrant, including amendments; or contract, including amendments; executed by the agency.

(f) The searchable website must include all information required by this section for all transactions that are initiated in fiscal year 2015 or later. In addition, all information that is included on the searchable website from the date of the inception of the website until July 1, 2014, must be maintained on the website according to the requirements of this section before July 1, 2014, and remain accessible for ten (10) years from the date it was originally made available. All data on the searchable website must remain accessible to the public for a minimum of ten (10) years.

(g) For the purposes of this subsection (1), the term "contract" includes, but is not limited to, personal and professional services contracts.

(2) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning shall create the IHL Accountability and Transparency website to include its executive office and the institutions of higher learning no later than July 1, 2012. This website shall:

(a) Provide access to existing financial reports, financial audits, budgets and other financial documents that are used to allocate, appropriate, spend and account for appropriated funds;

(b) Have a unique and simplified website address;

(c) Be directly accessible via a link from the main page of the Department of Finance and Administration website, as well as the IHL website and the main page of the website of each institution of higher learning;

(d) Include other links, features or functionality that will assist the public in obtaining and reviewing public financial information;

(e) Report expenditure information currently available within these enterprise resource planning (ERP) computer systems; and

(f) Design the reporting format using the existing capabilities of these ERP computer systems.

(3) The Mississippi Community College Board shall create the Community and Junior Colleges Accountability and Transparency website to include its executive office and the community and junior colleges no later than July 1, 2012. This website shall:

(a) Provide access to existing financial reports, financial audits, budgets and other financial documents that are used to allocate, appropriate, spend and account for appropriated funds;

(b) Have a unique and simplified website address;

(c) Be directly accessible via a link from the main page of the Department of Finance and Administration website, as well as the Mississippi Community College Board website and the main page of the website of each community and junior college;

(d) Include other links, features or functionality that will assist the public in obtaining and reviewing public financial information;

(e) Report expenditure information currently available within the computer system of each community and junior college; and

(f) Design the reporting format using the existing capabilities of the computer system of each community and junior college.

(4) Not later than January 1, 2016, the owner or owners of a community hospital, as defined in Section 41-13-10, shall create and maintain an accountability and transparency website for the community hospital or set up a separate section for the community hospital on the current website of the owner or owners. This website of the community hospital or section of the website of the owner or owners shall:

(a) Provide access to existing financial reports, financial audits, budgets and other financial documents of the community hospital that are used to allocate, appropriate, spend and account for public funds;

(b) Have a unique and simplified website address if it is a new website for the community hospital, or be an easily accessible section of the website of the owner or owners;

(c) Include links, features or functionality that will assist the public in obtaining and reviewing public financial information of the community hospital;

(d) Report expenditure information of the community hospital in functional expenditure categories that is currently available within the computer system of the community hospital; and

(e) Design the reporting format using the existing capabilities of the computer system or systems of the owner or owners of the community hospital.

(5) By July 1, 2022, each county with a population of eighty thousand (80,000) or more according to the latest federal decennial census shall create and maintain an accountability and transparency website for the county or set up a separate section on the county's current website. This website of the county or section of the website of the county shall:

(a) Provide access to existing financial reports, financial audits, budgets and other financial documents of the

county that are used to allocate, appropriate, spend and account for public funds;

(b) Have a unique and simplified website address if it is a new website, or be an easily accessible section of the current website of the county;

(c) Include links, features or functionality that will assist the public in obtaining and reviewing public financial information of the county;

(d) Report expenditure information of the county in functional expenditure categories that is currently available within the computer system of the county; and

(e) Design the reporting format using the existing capabilities of the computer system or systems of the county.

(6) By July 1, 2022, each municipality with a population of ten thousand (10,000) or more according to the latest federal decennial census shall create and maintain an accountability and transparency website for the municipality or set up a separate section on the municipality's current website. This website of the municipality or section of the website of the municipality shall:

(a) Provide access to existing financial reports, financial audits, budgets and other financial documents of the municipality that are used to allocate, appropriate, spend and account for public funds;

(b) Have a unique and simplified website address if it is a new website, or be an easily accessible section of the current website of the municipality;

(c) Include links, features or functionality that will assist the public in obtaining and reviewing public financial information of the municipality;

(d) Report expenditure information of the municipality in functional expenditure categories that is currently available within the computer system of the municipality; and

(e) Design the reporting format using the existing capabilities of the computer system or systems of the municipality.

SECTION 3. Section 27-104-163, Mississippi Code of 1972, is amended as follows:

27-104-163. The Department of Finance and Administration shall publish on its searchable website notice of any regular meeting held by a state agency, other than a legislative committee, in accordance with Section 25-41-13. For purposes of this section, the term "state agency" means an agency, department, institution, board, commission, council, office, bureau, division, committee or subcommittee of the state. However, the term "state agency" does not include institutions of higher learning *** * *** and community and junior colleges *** * ***.

SECTION 4. Section 27-104-161, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

27-104-161. No provision of Sections 27-104-151 through 27-104-159 shall be construed as conferring upon the Department of Finance and Administration any authority to review, approve or deny any expenditures or contracts entered into by the Legislature or any of its committees, or to impose any requirement on the Legislature or any of its committees to take any action other than to disclose expenditures and contracts entered into on or after July 1, 2011. For the purposes of this section, the term "contract" includes, but is not limited to, personal and professional services contracts.

SECTION 5. Section 27-104-103, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

27-104-103. (1) The Department of Finance and Administration shall have the following duties and powers:

(a) To provide administrative guidance to the various departments and agencies of state government;

(b) To facilitate the expedient delivery of services and programs for the benefit of the citizens of the state;

(c) To analyze and develop efficient management practices and assist departments and agencies in implementing effective and efficient work management systems;

(d) To conduct management review of state agencies and departments and recommend a management plan to state departments and agencies when corrective action is required;

(e) To, at least annually, report to the Governor and the Legislature on programs and actions taken to improve the conduct of state operations and to prepare and recommend management programs for effective and efficient management of the operations of state government;

(f) To allocate the federal-state programs funds to the departments responsible for the delivery of the programs and services for which the appropriation was made;

(g) To coordinate the planning functions of all agencies in the executive branch of government and review any and all plans which are developed by those agencies and departments;

(h) To collect and maintain the necessary data on which to base budget and policy development issues;

(i) To develop and analyze policy recommendations to the Governor;

(j) To develop and manage the executive budget process;

(k) To prepare the executive branch budget recommendations;

(l) To review and monitor the expenditures of the executive agencies and departments of government;

(m) To manage the state's fiscal affairs;

(n) To administer programs relating to general services, public procurement, insurance and the Bond Advisory Division;

(o) To administer the state's aircraft operation.

(2) The department shall have the following additional powers and duties under Chapter 18 of Title 17:

(a) It shall acquire the site submitted by the Mississippi Hazardous Waste Facility Siting Authority and, if determined necessary, design, finance, construct and operate a state commercial hazardous waste management facility;

(b) It may acquire by deed, purchase, lease, contract, gift, devise or otherwise any real or personal property, structures, rights-of-way, franchises, easements and other interest in land which is necessary and convenient for the construction or operation of the state commercial hazardous waste management facility, upon such terms and conditions as it deems advisable, hold, mortgage, pledge or otherwise encumber the same, and lease, sell, convey or otherwise dispose of the same in such a manner as may be necessary or advisable to carry out the purposes of Chapter 18 of Title 17;

(c) It shall develop and implement, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Quality, schedules of user fees, franchise fees and other charges, including nonregulatory penalties and surcharges applicable to the state commercial hazardous waste management facility;

(d) It may employ consultants and contractors to provide services including site acquisition, design, construction, operation, closure, post-closure and perpetual care of the state commercial hazardous waste management facility;

(e) It may apply for and accept loans, grants and gifts from any federal or state agency or any political subdivision or any private or public organization;

(f) It shall make plans, surveys, studies and investigations as may be necessary or desirable with respect to the acquisition, development and use of real property and the design, construction, operation, closure and long-term care of the state commercial hazardous waste management facility;

(g) It shall have the authority to preempt any local ordinance or restriction which prohibits or has the effect of prohibiting the establishment or operation of the state commercial hazardous waste management facility;

(h) It may negotiate any agreement for site acquisition, design, construction, operation, closure, post-closure and perpetual care of the state commercial hazardous waste management facility and may negotiate any agreement with any local governmental unit pursuant to Chapter 18 of Title 17;

(i) It may promulgate rules and regulations necessary to effectuate the purposes of Chapter 18 of Title 17 not inconsistent therewith;

(j) If funds are not appropriated or if the appropriated funds are insufficient to carry out the provisions of Chapter 18 of Title 17, the department shall expend any funds available to it from any source to defray its costs to implement Chapter 18 of Title 17 through February 1, 1991.

(3) From and after July 1, 2016, the expenses of the Department of Finance and Administration shall be defrayed by appropriation from the State General Fund and all user charges and fees authorized under law such as rents, MAGIC fees, and other fees for services shall be deposited into the State General Fund as authorized by law.

(4) From and after July 1, 2016, the Department of Finance and Administration shall not charge another state agency a fee, assessment, rent or other charge for services or resources received by that state agency from the department.

SECTION 6. Section 7-7-211, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

7-7-211. The department shall have the power and it shall be its duty:

(a) To identify and define for all public offices of the state and its subdivisions generally accepted accounting principles or other accounting principles as promulgated by nationally recognized professional organizations and to consult with the State Fiscal Officer in the prescription and implementation of accounting rules and regulations;

(b) To provide best practices, for all public offices of regional and local subdivisions of the state, systems of accounting, budgeting and reporting financial facts relating to said offices in conformity with legal requirements and with generally accepted accounting principles or other accounting

principles as promulgated by nationally recognized professional organizations; to assist such subdivisions in need of assistance in the installation of such systems; to revise such systems when deemed necessary, and to report to the Legislature at periodic times the extent to which each office is maintaining such systems, along with such recommendations to the Legislature for improvement as seem desirable;

(c) To study and analyze existing managerial policies, methods, procedures, duties and services of the various state departments and institutions upon written request of the Governor, the Legislature or any committee or other body empowered by the Legislature to make such request to determine whether and where operations can be eliminated, combined, simplified and improved;

(d) To postaudit each year and, when deemed necessary, preaudit and investigate the financial affairs of the departments, institutions, boards, commissions, or other agencies of state government, as part of the publication of a comprehensive annual financial report for the State of Mississippi, or as deemed necessary by the State Auditor. In complying with the requirements of this paragraph, the department shall have the authority to conduct all necessary audit procedures on an interim and year-end basis;

(e) To postaudit and, when deemed necessary, preaudit and investigate separately the financial affairs of (i) the offices, boards and commissions of county governments and any

departments and institutions thereof and therein; (ii) public school districts, departments of education and junior college districts; and (iii) any other local offices or agencies which share revenues derived from taxes or fees imposed by the State Legislature or receive grants from revenues collected by governmental divisions of the state; the cost of such audits, investigations or other services to be paid as follows: Such part shall be paid by the state from appropriations made by the Legislature for the operation of the State Department of Audit as may exceed the sum of Thirty-five Dollars ($35.00) per man-hour for the services of each staff person engaged in performing the audit or other service plus the actual cost of any independent specialist firm contracted by the State Auditor to assist in the performance of the audit, which sum shall be paid by the county, district, department, institution or other agency audited out of its general fund or any other available funds from which such payment is not prohibited by law. Costs paid for independent specialists or firms contracted by the State Auditor shall be paid by the audited entity through the State Auditor to the specialist or firm conducting the postaudit.

Each school district in the state shall have its financial records audited annually, at the end of each fiscal year, either by the State Auditor or by a certified public accountant approved by the State Auditor. Beginning with the audits of fiscal year 2010 activity, no certified public accountant shall be selected to

perform the annual audit of a school district who has audited that district for three (3) or more consecutive years previously. Certified public accountants shall be selected in a manner determined by the State Auditor. The school district shall have the responsibility to pay for the audit, including the review by the State Auditor of audits performed by certified public accountants;

(f) To postaudit and, when deemed necessary, preaudit and investigate the financial affairs of the levee boards; agencies created by the Legislature or by executive order of the Governor; profit or nonprofit business entities administering programs financed by funds flowing through the State Treasury or through any of the agencies of the state, or its subdivisions; and all other public bodies supported by funds derived in part or wholly from public funds, except municipalities which annually submit an audit prepared by a qualified certified public accountant using methods and procedures prescribed by the department;

(g) To make written demand, when necessary, for the recovery of any amounts representing public funds improperly withheld, misappropriated and/or otherwise illegally expended by an officer, employee or administrative body of any state, county or other public office, and/or for the recovery of the value of any public property disposed of in an unlawful manner by a public officer, employee or administrative body, such demands to be made

(i) upon the person or persons liable for such amounts and upon the surety on official bond thereof, and/or (ii) upon any individual, partnership, corporation or association to whom the illegal expenditure was made or with whom the unlawful disposition of public property was made, if such individual, partnership, corporation or association knew or had reason to know through the exercising of reasonable diligence that the expenditure was illegal or the disposition unlawful. Such demand shall be premised on competent evidence, which shall include at least one (1) of the following: (i) sworn statements, (ii) written documentation, (iii) physical evidence, or (iv) reports and findings of government or other law enforcement agencies. Other provisions notwithstanding, a demand letter issued pursuant to this paragraph shall remain confidential by the State Auditor until the individual against whom the demand letter is being filed has been served with a copy of such demand letter. If, however, such individual cannot be notified within fifteen (15) days using reasonable means and due diligence, such notification shall be made to the individual's bonding company, if he or she is bonded. Each such demand shall be paid into the proper treasury of the state, county or other public body through the office of the department in the amount demanded within thirty (30) days from the date thereof, together with interest thereon in the sum of one percent (1%) per month from the date such amount or amounts were improperly withheld, misappropriated and/or otherwise illegally

expended. In the event, however, such person or persons or such surety shall refuse, neglect or otherwise fail to pay the amount demanded and the interest due thereon within the allotted thirty (30) days, the State Auditor shall have the authority and it shall be his duty to institute suit, and the Attorney General shall prosecute the same in any court of the state to the end that there shall be recovered the total of such amounts from the person or persons and surety on official bond named therein; and the amounts so recovered shall be paid into the proper treasury of the state, county or other public body through the State Auditor. In any case where written demand is issued to a surety on the official bond of such person or persons and the surety refuses, neglects or otherwise fails within one hundred twenty (120) days to either pay the amount demanded and the interest due thereon or to give the State Auditor a written response with specific reasons for nonpayment, then the surety shall be subject to a civil penalty in an amount of twelve percent (12%) of the bond, not to exceed Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000.00), to be deposited into the State General Fund;

(h) To investigate any alleged or suspected violation of the laws of the state by any officer or employee of the state, county or other public office in the purchase, sale or the use of any supplies, services, equipment or other property belonging thereto; and in such investigation to do any and all things necessary to procure evidence sufficient either to prove or

disprove the existence of such alleged or suspected violations. The Department of Investigation of the State Department of Audit may investigate, for the purpose of prosecution, any suspected criminal violation of the provisions of this chapter. For the purpose of administration and enforcement of this chapter, the enforcement employees of the Department of Investigation of the State Department of Audit have the powers of a law enforcement officer of this state, and shall be empowered to make arrests and to serve and execute search warrants and other valid legal process anywhere within the State of Mississippi. All enforcement employees of the Department of Investigation of the State Department of Audit hired on or after July 1, 1993, shall be required to complete the Law Enforcement Officers Training Program and shall meet the standards of the program;

(i) To issue subpoenas, with the approval of, and returnable to, a judge of a chancery or circuit court, in termtime or in vacation, to examine the records, documents or other evidence of persons, firms, corporations or any other entities insofar as such records, documents or other evidence relate to dealings with any state, county or other public entity. The circuit or chancery judge must serve the county in which the records, documents or other evidence is located; or where all or part of the transaction or transactions occurred which are the subject of the subpoena;

(j) In any instances in which the State Auditor is or shall be authorized or required to examine or audit, whether preaudit or postaudit, any books, ledgers, accounts or other records of the affairs of any public hospital owned or owned and operated by one or more political subdivisions or parts thereof or any combination thereof, or any school district, including activity funds thereof, it shall be sufficient compliance therewith, in the discretion of the State Auditor, that such examination or audit be made from the report of any audit or other examination certified by a certified public accountant and prepared by or under the supervision of such certified public accountant. Such audits shall be made in accordance with generally accepted standards of auditing, with the use of an audit program prepared by the State Auditor, and final reports of such audits shall conform to the format prescribed by the State Auditor. All files, working papers, notes, correspondence and all other data compiled during the course of the audit shall be available, without cost, to the State Auditor for examination and abstracting during the normal business hours of any business day. The expense of such certified reports shall be borne by the respective hospital, or any available school district funds other than minimum program funds, subject to examination or audit. The State Auditor shall not be bound by such certified reports and may, in his or their discretion, conduct such examination or audit

from the books, ledgers, accounts or other records involved as may be appropriate and authorized by law;

(k) The State Auditor shall have the authority to contract with qualified public accounting firms to perform selected audits required in paragraphs (d), (e), (f) and (j) of this section, if funds are made available for such contracts by the Legislature, or if funds are available from the governmental entity covered by paragraphs (d), (e), (f) and (j). Such audits shall be made in accordance with generally accepted standards of auditing. All files, working papers, notes, correspondence and all other data compiled during the course of the audit shall be available, without cost, to the State Auditor for examination and abstracting during the normal business hours of any business day;

(l) The State Auditor shall have the authority to establish training courses and programs for the personnel of the various state and local governmental entities under the jurisdiction of the Office of the State Auditor. The training courses and programs shall include, but not be limited to, topics on internal control of funds, property and equipment control and inventory, governmental accounting and financial reporting, and internal auditing. The State Auditor is authorized to charge a fee from the participants of these courses and programs, which fee shall be deposited into the Department of Audit Special Fund. State and local governmental entities are authorized to pay such fee and any travel expenses out of their general funds or any

other available funds from which such payment is not prohibited by law;

(m) Upon written request by the Governor or any member of the State Legislature, the State Auditor may audit any state funds and/or state and federal funds received by any nonprofit corporation incorporated under the laws of this state;

(n) To conduct performance audits of personal or professional service contracts by state agencies on a random sampling basis, or upon request of the State Personal Service Contract Review Board under Section 25-9-120(3);

(o) At the discretion of the State Auditor, the Auditor may conduct risk assessments, as well as performance and compliance audits based on Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS) of any state-funded economic development program authorized under Title 57, Mississippi Code of 1972. After risk assessments or program audits, the State Auditor may conduct audits of those projects deemed high-risk, specifically as they identify any potential wrongdoing or noncompliance based on objectives of the economic development program. The Auditor is granted authority to gather, audit and review data and information from the Mississippi Development Authority or any of its agents, the Department of Revenue, and when necessary under this paragraph, the recipient business or businesses or any other private, public or nonprofit entity with information relevant to the audit project. The maximum amount the State Auditor may bill

the oversight agency under this paragraph in any fiscal year is One Hundred Thousand Dollars ($100,000.00), based on reasonable and necessary expenses;

(p) To review and approve any independent auditor selected by the Mississippi Lottery Corporation in accordance with Section 27-115-89, to conduct an annual audit of the corporation; and

(q) To conduct audits or investigations of the Mississippi Lottery Corporation if in the opinion of the State Auditor conditions justify such audits or investigations.

SECTION 7. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2021.