MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE REGULAR SESSION 2021

By: Representative Crawford To: Education

HOUSE BILL NO. 757

AN ACT TO REQUIRE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO INSTALL VIDEO SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS EQUIPPED WITH AUDIO RECEPTION TECHNOLOGY IN CERTAIN AREAS OF SCHOOLS FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS; TO LIMIT VIEWING ACCESS OF RECORDED SURVEILLANCE TO CERTAIN DISTRICT AND INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL-FACILITY LICENSED PERSONNEL; TO REQUIRE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO PROTECT THE PRIVACY AND IDENTITY OF STUDENTS CAPTURED IN THE SURVEILLANCE WHO ARE NOT THE SUBJECT OF INCIDENTS GIVING RISE TO INVESTIGATION OR LITIGATION; TO AUTHORIZE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO CONTRACT WITH ANY COMPANY OR INDIVIDUAL, INDEPENDENT OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, TO PROVIDE SURVEILLANCE MONITORING SERVICE; TO REQUIRE THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, ACTING THROUGH THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD, TO EMPLOY CERTAIN PROCEDURES PRIOR TO AWARDING THE CONTRACT FOR MONITORING SERVICES; TO EXCLUDE THE NEED FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO EMPLOY SECURITY PERSONNEL OR REQUIRE THE IMMEDIATE PRESENCE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ON SCHOOL PREMISES EQUIPPED WITH SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS; TO BRING FORWARD SECTION 37-3-83, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, FOR PURPOSES OF POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

SECTION 1. (1) Each school district shall install video surveillance cameras equipped with audio reception technology into each self-contained classroom of school facilities which provides daily instruction to an exceptional child, as defined in Section 37-23-3, as well as in the gymnasium, interior corridors, cafeteria, designated recreational activity areas and on the exterior parameters of the school facility. Each point of access

that allows for the entry and exit of individuals also shall be under video surveillance.

(2) The surveillance footage and audio shall be viewable only by the district superintendent and by the principal and licensed personnel in the school building where the equipment is installed. In the event of an incident involving an exceptional child that warrants the disclosure of the video surveillance for investigation or litigation purposes, the district shall undertake every measure to protect the privacy and identity of any student not involved in the incident giving rise to the investigation or litigation for which the surveillance is being sought.

(3) The school district may contract with any company or individual, independent of the school district, to provide the necessary surveillance monitoring service. However, the school district, acting through the school board, may not select any one (1) company or individual without first advertising a request for proposals in a newspaper published in the county in which the school district is located or, if no newspaper is published in that county, then in a newspaper having a general circulation therein, for two (2) successive weeks, the first being at least ten (10) days before the public contract. The contract shall then be awarded to the best bid received and accepted by the board.

(4) With the installation of surveillance cameras on school premises as required under subsection (1) of this section, it shall not be necessary for the school district to employ security

personnel or require the immediate presence of law enforcement officers on a daily basis.

SECTION 2. Section 37-3-83, Mississippi Code of 1972, is brought forward as follows:

37-3-83. (1) There is established within the State Department of Education, using only existing staff and resources, a School Safety Grant Program, available to all eligible public school districts, to assist in financing programs to provide school safety. However, no monies from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grant may be used for the School Safety Grant Program.

(2) The school board of each school district, with the assistance of the State Department of Education School Safety Center, shall adopt a comprehensive local school district school safety plan and shall update the plan on an annual basis.

(3) Subject to the extent of appropriations available, the School Safety Grant Program shall offer any of the following specific preventive services, and other additional services appropriate to the most current school district school safety plan:

(a) Metal detectors;

(b) Video surveillance cameras, communications equipment and monitoring equipment for classrooms, school buildings, school grounds and school buses;

(c) Crisis management/action teams responding to school violence;

(d) Violence prevention training, conflict resolution training, behavioral stress training and other appropriate training designated by the State Department of Education for faculty and staff; and

(e) School safety personnel.

(4) Each local school district of this state may annually apply for school safety grant funds subject to appropriations by the Legislature. School safety grants shall include a base grant amount plus an additional amount per student in average daily attendance in the school or school district. The base grant amount and amount per student shall be determined by the State Board of Education, subject to specific appropriation therefor by the Legislature. In order to be eligible for such program, each local school board desiring to participate shall apply to the State Department of Education by May 31 before the beginning of the applicable fiscal year on forms provided by the department, and shall be required to establish a local School Safety Task Force to involve members of the community in the school safety effort. The State Department of Education shall determine by July 1 of each succeeding year which local school districts have submitted approved applications for school safety grants.

(5) As part of the School Safety Grant Program, the State Department of Education may conduct a pilot program to research

the feasibility of using video camera equipment in the classroom to address the following:

(a) Determine if video cameras in the classroom reduce student disciplinary problems;

(b) Enable teachers to present clear and convincing evidence of a student's disruptive behavior to the student, the principal, the superintendent and the student's parents; and

(c) Enable teachers to review teaching performance and receive diagnostic feedback for developmental purposes.

(6) Any local school district may use audio/visual-monitoring equipment in classrooms, hallways, buildings, grounds and buses for the purpose of monitoring school disciplinary problems.

(7) As a component of the comprehensive local school district school safety plan required under subsection (2) of this section, the school board of a school district may adopt and implement a policy addressing sexual abuse of children, to be known as "Erin's Law Awareness." Any policy adopted under this subsection may include or address, but need not be limited to, the following:

(a) Methods for increasing teacher, student and parental awareness of issues regarding sexual abuse of children, including knowledge of likely warning signs indicating that a child may be a victim of sexual abuse;

(b) Educational information for parents or guardians, which may be included in the school handbook, on the warning signs of a child being abused, along with any needed assistance, referral or resource information;

(c) Training for school personnel on child sexual abuse;

(d) Age-appropriate curriculum for students in prekindergarten through fifth grade;

(e) Actions that a child who is a victim of sexual abuse should take to obtain assistance and intervention;

(f) Counseling and resources available for students affected by sexual abuse; and

(g) Emotional and educational support for a child who has been abused to enable the child to be successful in school.

(8) As part of the school safety grant program, the State Department of Education shall establish three (3) pilot programs in six (6) school districts utilizing an evidence-based curriculum to provide students in Grades K-5 with skills to manage stress and anxiety in order for them to be better equipped to handle challenges in a healthy way and build resiliency. The Mississippi Department of Mental Health shall be responsible for the selection of the content of the evidence-based curriculum. The results of this pilot program shall be measured and reported, and such results shall be used in consideration of the implementation of this curriculum statewide.

(9) As a component of the comprehensive local school district safety plan required under subsection (2) of this section, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the State Department of Education shall require local school districts to conduct, every two (2) years, refresher training on mental health and suicide prevention for all school employees and personnel, including all cafeteria workers, custodians, teachers and administrators. The Mississippi Department of Mental Health shall be responsible for the development and/or selection of the content of the training, which training shall be provided at no cost to school employees. School districts shall report completion of the training to the State Department of Education.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2021.