STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Office of the Governor

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 1458

WHEREAS, on March 14, 2020, pursuant to the Constitution of the State of Mississippi and Miss. Code Ann. § 33-15-11(b)(17), I issued a Proclamation declaring that a State of Emergency exists in the State of Mississippi as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on January 31, 2020, the United States Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar declared a public health emergency for COVID-19 beginning on January 27, 2020, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic, and on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a nationwide state of emergency due to the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 and the effects of its extreme risk of person-to-person transmission throughout the United States and Mississippi significantly impact the life and health of our people, as well as the economy of Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, the risk of spread of COVID-19 within Mississippi constitutes a public emergency that may result in substantial injury or harm to life, health, and property within Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the Mississippi State Department of Health confirmed the first presumptive case of COVID-19 in Mississippi and as of March 16, 2020, there are 12 presumptive and confirmed cases in Mississippi that have tested positive for COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for responding to COVID-19 suggests avoiding crowds as much as possible, especially for older adults and individuals with serious chronic medical conditions, and the Mississippi State Department of Health has recommended avoiding large gatherings of more than 250 people; and

WHEREAS, Mississippi state agencies and governmental entities as well as school districts that have temporarily closed or are operating on limited staffing in response to COVID-19 in order to minimize the interaction and risk of possible transmission of COVID-19 between employees within governmental offices and between governmental employees and members of the public will need flexibility to meet continuity of essential operations and to address the economic impact on employees who may be asked not to report to work if their duties are not deemed essential during any period of time during the State of Emergency; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tate Reeves, Governor of the State of Mississippi, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Mississippi, do hereby order and direct as follows:

1. That due to the State of Emergency all State agencies, boards, commissions, Mississippi school districts, and other state entities are directed to promptly review and identify which employees perform essential duties to carry out the entity's core functions during the State of Emergency and those employees whose duties are not deemed essential during any period of time during the State of Emergency. And where feasible, as determined by the entity, if core functions and duties could be performed by essential employees from home in order to minimize the interaction and risk of possible transmission of COVID-19 between employees.

2. That during the remainder of the school year school districts immediately begin working with the Mississippi Department of Education to develop and implement distance learning or other instructional means to achieve completion of essential grade-level instruction for the 2019-2020 school year.

3. That with appropriate social distancing school districts shall, where feasible, maintain sufficient staffing for preparation and transportation in order to continue to provide free and reduced meals to eligible students within their respective districts.

4. That due to the State of Emergency and pursuant to Miss. Code Ann. § 25-3-92(2)(b), agencies, boards, commissions, and other state entities may grant their employees administrative leave with pay for any one or more of the following reasons as determined by the appointing authority:
    a. The period(s) of time that the employee's employer has closed in response to COVID-19.
    b. The period(s) of time that the employee's supervisor has determined the employee's duties are deemed non-essential during any period of time during the State of Emergency.
    c. The period(s) of time that the employee or a member of their immediate household is placed in quarantine or isolation as a result of being diagnosed with COVID-19.
    d. Other reasons as determined by the appointing authority in consultation with a health care professional that are necessary to prevent the risk of possible transmission of COVID-19 within the employee's workplace.

5. That all departments, commissions, agencies, institutions, and boards of the State of Mississippi or any political subdivisions thereof are authorized and directed to cooperate in actions and measures taken in response to COVID-19 during the State of Emergency.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Mississippi to be affixed.

DONE in the City of Jackson, on the 16th day of March, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and forty-fourth.

TATE REEVES
GOVERNOR

BY THE GOVERNOR

MICHAEL WATSON
SECRETARY OF STATE