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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-2402

July 15, 2022

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

**RE: Request for Federal Investigation into Former Governor Phil Bryant's Embezzlement of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Funds**

It has come to my attention that the State of Mississippi has consistently misspent Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds. Specifically, Governor Phil Bryant is alleged to have steered money toward individuals who did not meet the criteria for eligibility.

In 2018, the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) received \$135 million in TANF dollars, yet \$77 million of those dollars were misdirected due to the influence of the governor's office. The governor's influence was blatantly apparent in a conversation between retired NFL quarterback Brett Favre and a contractor regarding the new MDHS Director, Christopher Freeze's attentiveness to where funds were being directed. In the text message conversation, Brett Favre referred to another conversation where the new director was classified as "*not being their type*", the contractor responded, "*well we may need the governor to make him our type.*"<sup>[1]</sup> Governor Phil Bryant, has clearly taken actions consistent with ensuring Mississippi's poorest citizens are denied welfare funds meant to benefit their households.

Mississippi Auditor Shad White has identified numerous questionable and possibly illegal expenditures relative to the misspent TANF funds in a 2020 [audit report](#). Phil Bryant should have known better than to do what he did with this funding meant for families in need.

In **January of 2016**, Governor Phil Bryant announced his appointment of John Davis, the former director of the Mississippi Department of Human Services and one of six indicted on embezzlement charges for the misuse of welfare funds. In **July of 2016**, The Mississippi Community Education Center (MCEC), one of the non-profit organizations intertwined in the scheme, received \$11.4 million in funding for FY2017 after receiving roughly \$1.1 million from MDHS the previous year. In **July of 2017**, MDHS doubled its funding for FY2018 to MCEC to \$22.4 million. In **October of 2017**, MCEC used federal welfare dollars to pay \$5 million in cash

<sup>[1]</sup> Alex McDaniel, *Brett Favre Solicited Welfare Money from Mississippi, and It's Time to Pay Up*, <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/sports/2022/05/13/brett-favre-solicited-welfare-money-mississippi-time-pay-up/9766171002/> (2022).

to build a state-of-the-art volleyball facility on the University of Southern Mississippi campus. In **September of 2018**, the accountant for MCEC conspired to transfer at least \$2 million of funds from MDHS to personal accounts. In **January of 2019**, there was an illegal transfer of \$750,000 MCEC funds for a personal investment in a medical technology company in Florida, which was the first of many illegal transfers. In **October of 2019**, there was an illegal transfer of \$2.1 million from MCEC to two Florida companies using Mississippi Welfare funds.

Previously, the court evidence showed that the funds were misspent under the leadership of former Governor Phil Bryant amidst speculation that Bryant was directly involved. We now know from a Hinds County Court filing that Governor Bryant has been formally accused of directing the MS DHS to direct \$1.1 million to Brett Favre. The people of Mississippi are entitled to a proper investigation into the embezzlement of TANF funding meant for families in need. It is egregious that news reports produce critical information that has yet to be addressed in the current investigations by state and local agencies.

This gross misuse of TANF dollars must illicit a review of former Governor Phil Bryant's involvement. Such an investigation should also examine the intolerable activity of retired NFL quarterback Brett Favre and how his actions were aided by Governor Bryant.

I urge you to work with the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a federal investigation into the Mississippi TANF embezzlement scheme that centers around the role of former Governor Phil Bryant. The people of Mississippi deserve answers, and accountability for breaking the law must be upheld for all who were involved: especially for Governor Bryant.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Claytrice Henderson in my Washington, D.C. office at 202-225-5876 or via email at [claytrice.henderson@mail.house.gov](mailto:claytrice.henderson@mail.house.gov). No one, especially our elected officials, is above the law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress