By: Senator(s) Walls, Jones

To: Business and Financial Institutions

SENATE BILL NO. 2934

AN ACT TO CREATE THE "CREDIT ENHANCEMENT LOAN ACT OF 2008"; 1 TO PROVIDE FOR FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE; TO DEFINE CERTAIN 2 3 TERMS AS USED IN THE ACT; TO REQUIRE LICENSING OF LENDERS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF BANKING AND CONSUMER FINANCE; TO PRESCRIBE PENALTIES 4 5 FOR VIOLATIONS; TO PROVIDE FOR FEES PAYABLE TO THE DEPARTMENT; TO 6 ESTABLISH REOUIREMENTS NECESSARY FOR ISSUANCE OF A LICENSE BY THE 7 DEPARTMENT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE FORM AND CONTENTS OF AN 8 APPLICATION; TO PROVIDE FOR REVOCATION OR SUSPENSION OF A LICENSE; 9 TO PROVIDE FOR AMOUNTS OF LOANS AND INTEREST RATES; TO PROHIBIT MULTIPLE LOANS IN CERTAIN SITUATIONS; TO PROVIDE FOR ENFORCEMENT 10 OF LOAN AGREEMENTS; TO PROVIDE FOR DISCLOSURE FORMS FOR THE 11 CUSTOMER; TO PROVIDE FOR REPORTS TO CREDIT BUREAUS; TO REQUIRE 12 MAINTENANCE OF FINANCIAL RECORDS BY LICENSEES; TO PROVIDE FOR 13 REPORTS TO BE FILED WITH THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING AND CONSUMER 14 FINANCE; TO PROVIDE FOR DESIST ORDERS; TO PROVIDE FOR APPEALS FROM 15 ACTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT; TO PROVIDE FOR NONENFORCEMENT OF CREDIT 16 ENHANCEMENT LOANS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES. 17

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

19 **SECTION 1.** This chapter shall be known and may be cited as

20 the "Credit Enhancement Loan Act of 2008."

21 **SECTION 2.** The Legislature of the State of Mississippi

22 finds:

(a) Customer education for unbanked and underbanked
customers is necessary in order to educate them on the various
options for customer credit and financial services that are
available;
(b) Mainstream banking services should be made
available to unbanked customers to meet their individual financial

29 needs;

30 (c) Accurate and understandable disclosure of agreement
 31 terms, conditions and the cost of obtaining credit is absolutely
 32 essential; and

33 (d) It is necessary to provide and support ongoing 34 activities to equitably provide mainstream financial services and 35 credit products to financially underserved customers while 36 providing a vehicle to bridge the gap of the financial empowerment 37 divide.

38 <u>SECTION 3.</u> The purpose of this chapter is to: 39 (a) Provide a vehicle for banking services and 40 mainstream credit products to build and rebuild credit histories 41 to enable customers in all segments of the financial spectrum, 42 especially the financially underserved and unbanked populations, 43 to improve their credit ratings and qualify for mainstream 44 financial services;

45 (b) Set forth a minimum set of parameters to establish
46 a credit enhancement loan that other financial institutions may
47 offer to qualified customers; and

(c) Recognize that oftentimes there is a high cost to a financial institution in serving this segment of the customer financial marketplace, and therefore a higher risk based interest rate shall be permitted to cover this higher risk when a credit enhancement loan is offered.

53 <u>SECTION 4.</u> As used in this chapter, the following terms 54 shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section unless 55 the context requires a different meaning:

(a) "Amount of the extension of credit" means the
aggregate of the loan amounts, fees and other charges authorized
by this chapter.

(b) "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Bankingand Consumer Finance.

61 (c) "Credit enhancement loan" means a short-term loan 62 that complies with all of the requirements of this chapter.

63 (d) "Creditable assets" means cash or bank deposits,
64 loans or extensions of credit made as a licensee pursuant to this

65 chapter or any other amounts as the commissioner may approve, or 66 any combination of two (2) or more of these amounts.

(e) "Customer" means any person who borrows money from
any licensee or who pays or obligates himself or herself to pay
any money or otherwise furnishes any valuable consideration to any
licensee for any act of the licensee as a licensee.

(f) "Department" means the Department of Banking andConsumer Finance.

73 (g) "Deputy" means the Deputy Commissioner of Banking74 and Consumer Finance.

75 (h) "License" means the license issued by the 76 commissioner under the authority of this chapter to issue credit 77 enhancement loans.

78 (i) "Licensee" means a person to whom one or more79 licenses have been issued.

80 (j) "Loans" or "loan" means a loan made within this81 state by a licensee pursuant to this chapter.

82 (k) "Person" includes any person, firm, partnership,83 association, corporation or other legal entity.

84 SECTION 5. (1) No person shall engage in the business of 85 offering credit enhancement loans in amounts of Three Thousand 86 Dollars (\$3,000.00) or less and contract for, exact, or receive, 87 directly or indirectly, on or in connection with any credit enhancement loan, any charges whether for interest, compensation, 88 89 consideration or expense, or any other purpose whatsoever, which in the aggregate are greater than authorized by this chapter and 90 without first having obtained a license from the commissioner. 91 92 The term "lending" as used in this section includes, but is not 93 limited to, endorsing or otherwise securing extensions of credit 94 or contracts for the repayment of extensions of credit.

95 (2) The provisions of subsection (1) of this section shall
96 apply to any person who seeks to avoid its application by any
97 device, subterfuge or pretense whatsoever.

(3) Any person not exempt from this chapter who fails to 98 comply with or who otherwise violates any of the provisions of 99 this chapter or any regulation of the department adopted pursuant 100 101 to this chapter shall be guilty of a misdemeanor. Each violation 102 shall be considered a separate offense. It shall be the duty of the commissioner to provide the district attorney of the court 103 104 having jurisdiction of any offense under this chapter with facts and evidence in his or her actual or constructive possession and 105 to testify as to those facts upon the trial of any person for any 106 107 offense under this chapter.

(4) Any contract for the extension of credit the making or collecting of which violates any provision of this chapter or regulation issued pursuant to this chapter, except as a result of accidental or bona fide error of computation, shall be void; and the licensee or any other party in violation shall have no right to collect, receive or retain any principal or charges whatsoever with respect to that extension of credit.

115 <u>SECTION 6.</u> Each licensee, for the purpose of defraying 116 necessary expenses of the commissioner and his or her agents, 117 shall pay to the commissioner the fees prescribed in Section 7 of 118 this act at the times specified therein.

119 SECTION 7. (1) No person shall engage in or offer to engage 120 in the business of credit enhancement loans regulated by this chapter unless and until a license has been issued by the 121 122 commissioner, and the commissioner shall issue a license under 123 this chapter if the commissioner finds that the applicant has, on a consolidated basis and computed in accordance with generally 124 125 accepted accounting principles, a minimum net worth of not less than One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000.00) at the time of 126 127 application for a license.

(2) Upon the receipt of an application, the commissioner
shall investigate the facts. The commissioner shall approve or
deny every application for a license within 90 days from the date

a complete application is submitted. This period may be extended 131 by the written consent of the applicant. The commissioner shall 132 notify the applicant of the date when the application is deemed 133 134 complete. In the absence of approval or denial of the 135 application, or consent to the extension of the ninety-day period, 136 the application shall be deemed approved and the commissioner 137 shall issue the license effective as of the first day after the 138 ninety-day or extended period has elapsed. If the commissioner 139 reasonably determines from a preliminary investigation that the applicant does not satisfy the conditions set forth in subsection 140 141 (1) of this section, the commissioner shall so notify the 142 applicant in writing and offer specific findings of fact as to the 143 provisions of this section that have not been met. The applicant 144 shall then be entitled to an informal hearing on the decision that 145 the applicant does not satisfy the conditions set forth in this 146 section, provided that the applicant requests an informal hearing in writing within thirty (30) days after receipt by the applicant 147 148 of the notification of failure to the applicant. In the event of 149 an informal hearing, to be held in the offices of the 150 commissioner, the commissioner shall reconsider the application 151 and, after the hearing, issue a written order granting or denying 152 the application. The applicant shall be entitled to a formal 153 appeal and hearing as prescribed in Section 21 of this act. (3) Each licensee shall continue at all times to have 154

155 available for the operation of the business on a consolidated 156 basis and computed in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles a minimum net worth of not less than One 157 158 Million Dollars (\$1,000,000.00). The requirements and standards 159 of this subsection shall be maintained throughout the period of 160 the license, and failure to maintain these requirements or standards shall be grounds for the revocation of a license under 161 162 the provisions of Code Section 10 of this act.

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163 <u>SECTION 8.</u> (1) The application for license shall be made on 164 a form prepared and furnished by the commissioner and shall state 165 all of the following:

166 (a) The fact that the applicant desires to engage in167 business under this chapter;

(b) Whether the applicant is an individual,partnership, association, corporation or other legal entity;

170 (c) The name and address of the person who will manage171 and be in immediate control of the business;

(d) The names and addresses of the owners of the business and their percentage of equity in the business, unless the commissioner deems it not feasible to furnish the information because of the number of stockholders involved. This paragraph shall not apply to publicly held corporations and their operating subsidiaries; and

(e) When the applicant proposes to commence doingbusiness.

180 (2) The statements made in this application shall be sworn
181 to by the applicant or the persons making the application on the
182 applicant's behalf.

(3) At the time of making an application, the applicant shall pay the department Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) as a fee for investigating the application, which shall be retained whether or not a license is granted to the applicant.

188 <u>SECTION 9.</u> (1) A licensee may conduct and carry on its 189 business only at the location or locations that are approved by 190 the commissioner, and no changes shall be made from one location 191 to another without prior notice to the commissioner.

(2) The commissioner may issue more than one (1) license to the same licensee for multiple places of business upon compliance with all the provisions of this chapter governing issuance of a

195 license.

(3) If any change occurs in the primary name and address of the licensee, the legal agent of a licensed corporation, or in the membership of any licensed partnership, a full statement of the change, sworn to as required by subsection (2) of Section 8 of this act for an original application, shall be filed with the commissioner within thirty (30) days.

202 SECTION 10. (1) The commissioner may issue an order 203 revoking or suspending the right of a licensee and an officer, 204 agent, employee, or representative to do business in Mississippi as a licensee if the commissioner finds, after due notice and 205 206 hearing, or opportunity for hearing, that the licensee or an 207 officer, agent, employee, or representative of that licensee has 208 done any of the following:

(a) Materially failed to comply with the rules,
regulations, instructions or orders issued by the department;

(b) Materially failed or refused to make its reports to the commissioner;

(c) Failed to pay the fees for its examination andsupervision that are validly due and owed; or

(d) Knowingly furnished false information to the commissioner or the department.

217 Upon receipt of an order revoking or suspending the right of that licensee to do business in Mississippi from the commissioner, 218 the licensee shall immediately surrender his or her license to the 219 220 commissioner. Within five (5) days after the entry of an order to 221 cease business in Mississippi, the commissioner shall place on file his or her findings of fact and mail or otherwise deliver a 222 223 copy to the licensee. Any licensee who fails to make any 224 extension of credits during any period of one (1) year after being 225 licensed shall surrender his or her license to the commissioner. Any licensee may surrender any license by delivering it 226 (2) 227 to the commissioner with written notice of the surrender, but the

228 surrender shall not affect the licensee's civil or criminal

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229 liability for acts committed prior to the surrender of the 230 license.

(3) No revocation, suspension, or surrender of any license
 shall impair or affect the obligation of any preexisting lawful
 contract between the licensee and any obligor.

(4) The commissioner, in his or her discretion, may reinstate suspended licenses or issue new licenses to a person whose license or licenses have been revoked or surrendered if and when he or she determines no fact or condition exists which clearly would have justified the commissioner in refusing originally to issue the license under this chapter.

(5) The licensee shall be entitled to a formal appeal and hearing as prescribed in Secton 21 of this act.

242 SECTION 11. (1) Every licensee under this chapter shall 243 make credit available through credit enhancement loans in an amount not exceeding Three Thousand Dollars (\$3,000.00) at a 244 245 maximum interest rate of up to nineteen and nine-tenths percent 246 (19.9%) per annum. Interest shall be contracted for and collected 247 at the single simple interest rate applied to the outstanding balance that would earn the same amount of interest as the initial 248 249 rate for payment according to schedule.

(2) Interest on credit enhancement loans made pursuant to
this section shall not be paid, deducted, or received in advance.
Interest shall not be compounded, but interest on extension of
credit shall:

(a) Be computed and paid only as a percentage of the
 unpaid principal balance or portion of the unpaid principal
 balance; and

(b) Be computed on the basis of the number of daysactually elapsed.

If, however, part or all of the consideration for a credit enhancement loan is the unpaid principal balance of a prior credit enhancement loan, then the principal amount payable under the new

262 credit enhancement loan may include any unpaid interest on the 263 prior credit enhancement loan which has accrued within ninety (90) 264 days before the making of the new credit enhancement loan. For 265 the purpose of computing interest, a day shall equal one and three 266 hundred sixty-fifths (1/365) of a year. Any payment made on a 267 credit enhancement loan shall be applied first to any accrued 268 interest and then to principal. Any portion or all of the principal balance on a credit enhancement loan may be prepaid at 269 270 any time without penalty.

(3) Minimum principal payment requirements on a credit enhancement loan shall be 4 percent of the loan amount or Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00), whichever is greater. Customers shall be billed monthly, at a minimum.

(4) In addition to the interest authorized in subsection (1) of this section, a licensee offering credit enhancement loans under this chapter may collect from the customer an annual fee of up to One Hundred Eighty Dollars (\$180.00) for processing the credit enhancement loan.

(5) A maximum one-time underwriting fee shall not exceed TenDollars (\$10.00).

(6) The maximum monthly maintenance fee shall not exceedFifteen Dollars (\$15.00).

(7) The maximum fee for a late payment on a creditenhancement loan shall be Twenty-five Dollars (\$25.00).

(8) The maximum fee charged for a returned check from aborrower shall be Thirty Dollars (\$30.00).

(9) The minimum term of a credit enhancement loan shall bethree (3) months.

(10) Every licensee under this chapter shall report on a periodic basis, based on accepted industry standards, credit related data, as incurred, and without discrimination, to major credit bureaus to assist customers who pay in a timely manner in building or rebuilding their credit histories.

(11) Every licensee under this chapter shall graduate customers to better interest rates and other terms based on positive payment histories in a manner submitted by the licensee and approved by the commissioner.

(12) Every licensee under this chapter shall offer and
 encourage customers to participate in programs designed to enhance
 financial literacy enhancement.

302 (13) If a money judgment is obtained against any party on
303 any credit enhancement loan made under the provisions of this
304 section, neither the judgment nor the credit enhancement loan
305 shall carry, from the date of the judgment, any interest in excess
306 of eight percent (8%) per annum.

307 (14) Every licensee under this chapter shall charge only 308 those fees and interest as authorized in this section and filed 309 with the commissioner.

310 (15) Every licensee under this chapter shall determine the 311 credit worthiness of a customer applying for a credit enhancement 312 loan based on industry accepted or proprietary credit models.

313 <u>SECTION 12.</u> (1) A licensee shall not make credit 314 enhancement loans in one office to any customer who already has an 315 outstanding credit enhancement loan in another office operated by 316 the same entity or by another licensee that is an affiliate, 317 parent, subsidiary, or under the same ownership, management, or 318 control, whether partial or complete.

319 (2) A licensee shall take every reasonable precaution to
 320 prevent granting credit enhancement loans in violation of
 321 subsection (1) of this section.

322 (3) A licensee may service credit enhancement loans and 323 modify the terms of the loans within the limits authorized by 324 Section 13 of this act at any office operated by that licensee 325 regardless of where the credit enhancement loan was originated.

326 **SECTION 13.** (1) A licensee may not take an assignment of 327 earnings of the customer for payment or as security for payment of

a credit enhancement loan. An assignment of earnings in violation of this section is unenforceable by the assignee of the earnings and is revocable by the customer. However, nothing in this section restricts a licensee and customer from entering into an agreement whereby repayment of a credit enhancement loan can be made through automatic payroll deduction, direct withdrawal from a checking account or other automatic repayment plans.

335 (2) An agreement between a licensee and a customer pursuant 336 to a credit enhancement loan under this chapter pertaining to 337 default by the customer is enforceable only to the extent that the 338 customer fails to make a payment as required by the agreement.

(3) No licensee shall deny any credit enhancement loan or discriminate in the fixing of the amount, duration, application procedures, or other terms or conditions of any credit enhancement loan or services because of the race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or marital status of the applicant or any other person connected with the transaction.

345 (4) With respect to a credit enhancement loan or services
346 made pursuant to the provisions of this chapter, the agreement
347 shall not provide for payment by the customer of attorney's fees.

348 (5) No licensee shall make any credit enhancement loan 349 within this state which shall in any way be secured by real 350 property.

(6) No licensee shall engage in any unfair method of competition or unfair or deceptive trade practices in the conduct of making or providing any credit enhancement loans or services to customers pursuant to this chapter or in collecting or attempting to collect any money alleged to be due and owing by a customer.

356 <u>SECTION 14.</u> (1) At the time a credit enhancement loan is 357 made available to a customer, the licensee shall deliver to the 358 customer or, if there are two or more customers to such a loan, a 359 copy of a written statement, showing in clear and distinct terms 360 all of the following:

361 (a) The name and address of the licensee and one of the362 primary obligors on the credit enhancement loan;

363

(b) The date of the contract;

364 (c) A schedule or description of required payments;

365 (d) All applicable interest rates; and

366 (e) Any financial literacy materials available to the367 customer.

368 (2) At each of its places of business in Mississippi, the 369 licensee shall make readily available to the customer, in a form 370 prescribed by the commissioner, a full and accurate schedule of 371 charges on all credit enhancement loans currently being made 372 available by the licensee.

373 (3) A copy of that schedule required by subsection (2) of374 this section shall be filed in the office of the commissioner.

(4) No licensee shall require the customer to agree to or execute any confession of judgment or power of attorney in favor of any licensee or in favor of any third person, and any confession of judgment or power of attorney taken in violation of this subsection shall be absolutely void.

380 SECTION 15. No licensee subject to this chapter shall 381 advertise, display, distribute, telecast, or broadcast or cause or 382 permit to be advertised, displayed, distributed, telecast, or 383 broadcast in any manner whatsoever any false, misleading or 384 deceptive statement or representation with regard to the rates, 385 terms or conditions of credit enhancement loans. The commissioner 386 may require that charges or rates of charge, if stated by a licensee, be stated fully and clearly in any manner that the 387 388 commissioner deems necessary to prevent misunderstanding by 389 prospective customers. The commissioner may permit or require 390 licensees to refer in their advertising to the fact that their business is under state supervision, subject to any conditions 391 392 required by the commissioner to prevent an erroneous impression as 393 to the scope or degree of protection provided by this chapter.

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394 (1) Each licensee shall maintain all financial SECTION 16. 395 books and records directly relating to any credit enhancement 396 loans made or provided under this chapter reasonably required by 397 the commissioner to be kept for two (2) years; and the 398 commissioner, the deputy commissioner or a duly authorized examiner or agent or employee may examine those records at any 399 400 reasonable time to determine whether the licensee is complying 401 with this chapter and the rules issued to implement this chapter. 402 The required financial books and records may be maintained in any 403 form authorized by the commissioner. The financial books and 404 records of each licensed office shall be clearly segregated. When 405 a licensee maintains its financial books and records outside of 406 Mississippi, the licensee shall make them available for 407 examination at the place where they are maintained and shall pay 408 for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by the commissioner in conducting any examination. Where the data 409 410 processing for any licensee is performed by a person other than 411 the licensee, the licensee shall provide to the commissioner a 412 copy of a binding agreement between the licensee and the data 413 processor which allows the commissioner, the deputy commissioner 414 or a duly authorized examiner or agent or employee to examine that 415 particular data processor's activities pertaining to the licensee 416 to the same extent as if the data processing services were being performed by the licensee on its own premises; and, when billed by 417 418 the commissioner, the licensee shall reimburse the commissioner 419 for all costs and expenses incurred by the commissioner in an 420 examination under this subsection.

(2) Each licensee shall file annually with the commissioner on or before March 31 for the twelve-month period ending the preceding December 31 reports on forms prescribed by the commissioner. These annual reports shall disclose in detail and under appropriate headings any changes in the information contained in the original license application and other

427 information necessary to show that the licensee continues to be in 428 compliance with this chapter. Reports shall be verified by the 429 oath or affirmation of the owner, manager, president, vice 430 president, cashier, secretary or treasurer of the licensee.

(3) If a licensee conducts another business or is affiliated with other licensees under this chapter or if any other situation exists under which allocations of expense are necessary, the licensee or licensees shall make that allocation according to appropriate and generally accepted accounting principles.

SECTION 17. The commissioner may issue all rules it deems 436 437 necessary in implementing this chapter and in providing for the 438 protection of the borrowing public and the efficient management of 439 licensees under this chapter and to give all necessary 440 instructions to these licensees for the purpose of interpreting 441 this chapter. All licensees under this chapter and their officers, agents, and employees shall comply fully with all of the 442 443 rules and instructions. When issued, any rule shall be forwarded 444 by mail to each licensee at its licensed place of business at 445 least twenty (20) days prior to the rule's effective date.

446 <u>SECTION 18.</u> The commissioner may issue subpoenas and compel 447 attendance of witnesses, administer oaths, conduct hearings and 448 transcribe testimony in making the investigations and conducting 449 the hearings required by this chapter or in the other discharge of 450 his or her duties and give any publicity to his or her 451 investigations and findings as he or she may deem best for the 452 public interest.

453 <u>SECTION 19.</u> When the commissioner has reasonable cause, 454 supported by written evidence, to believe that any person is 455 violating or is threatening to violate any provision of this 456 chapter, the commissioner may in addition to all actions provided 457 for in this chapter and without prejudice to those other actions 458 enter an order requiring a person to desist or to refrain from a 459 violation; and an action may be brought in the name of the

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460 commissioner to enjoin the person from engaging in or continuing the violation or from doing any act or acts in furtherance of the 461 462 violation. In any action to desist, an order or judgment may be 463 entered awarding any preliminary or final injunction as may be 464 deemed proper. In addition to all other means provided by law for 465 the enforcement of a restraining order or injunction, the court in 466 which the action is brought may impound and appoint a receiver for the property and business of the defendant, including any books, 467 468 papers, documents and records that the court deems reasonably 469 necessary to prevent violations of this chapter through or by 470 means of the use of that property and business. The receiver, 471 when appointed and qualified, shall have those powers and duties pertaining to custody, collection, administration, winding up and 472 473 liquidation of the property and business as shall from time to 474 time be conferred upon him or her by the court.

475 <u>SECTION 20.</u> Any person aggrieved by any rule, order or act 476 of the department may appeal to the commissioner for review upon 477 giving notice in writing within sixty (60) days after such rule, 478 order or act is adopted, issued or done. Any aggrieved party to a 479 decision of the department shall be entitled to an appeal pursuant 480 to the Administrative Procedures Act.

481 SECTION 21. No credit enhancement loan made after July 1, 482 2008, that is made outside this state in the amount of or the value of Three Thousand Dollars (\$3,000.00) or less for which 483 484 greater consideration or charges than are authorized by this 485 chapter have been charged, contracted for, or received shall be 486 enforced in this state. This prohibition shall not apply to 487 credit enhancement loans in which contractual activities, including solicitation, discussion, negotiation, offer, 488 489 acceptance, signing of documents or delivery and receipt of funds occur entirely outside this state. 490

491 SECTION 22. This act shall be codified as a new Chapter 2 in
492 Title 81, Mississippi Code of 1972.

493 SECTION 23. This act shall take effect and be in force from 494 and after July 1, 2008.