- 1 SB229
- 2 217394-1
- 3 By Senator Figures
- 4 RFD: Judiciary
- 5 First Read: 16-FEB-22

1	217394-1:n	1:02/16/2022:KMS/cr LSA2022-618
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8	SYNOPSIS:	Under existing law, the Alabama Board of
9		Court Reporting is responsible for the regulation
10		of the practice of court reporting in the state.
11		This bill would provide further for the
12		definitions of freelance court reporter, official
13		court reporter, and supervising court reporter.
14		This bill would authorize the board to meet
15		by video conference or other electronic means.
16		This bill would provide further for the
17		authority of the board to hire staff.
18		This bill would provide further for the
19		investigation of and hearings regarding complaints
20		pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act, and
21		penalties for violations.
22		This bill would provide further for the
23		qualifications for licensure and temporary
24		licensure and practice pursuant to a temporary
25		license.

This bill would provide further for requirements and procedures relating to lapsed and expired licenses. This bill would also provide further for the fees that may be charged by the board. A BILL TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT To amend Sections 34-8B-2, 34-8B-4, 34-8B-5, 

To amend Sections 34-8B-2, 34-8B-4, 34-8B-5, 34-8B-6, 34-8B-8, 34-8B-10, 34-8B-12, 34-8B-13, 34-8B-15, 34-8B-16, and 34-8B-17, Code of Alabama 1975, relating to the Alabama Board of Court Reporting; to provide further for the definitions of freelance, official, and supervising court reporters; to authorize the board to meet by video conference or other electronic means; to provide further for the authority of the board to hire staff; to provide further for the investigation of and hearings regarding complaints pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act; to provide penalties for violations; to provide further for the qualifications for licensure and temporary licensure; to provide further for practice pursuant to a temporary license; to provide further for requirements and procedures relating to lapsed and expired licenses; and to provide further for the fees that may be charged by the board.

27 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

2.0

Section 1. Sections 34-8B-2, 34-8B-4, 34-8B-5, 34-8B-6, 34-8B-8, 34-8B-10, 34-8B-12, 34-8B-13, 34-8B-15, 34-8B-16, and 34-8B-17 of the Code of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

"§34-8B-2.

"As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

- "(1) ACRA. The Alabama Court Reporters Association.
- "(2) BOARD. The Alabama Board of Court Reporting.
- "(3) CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER (C.C.R.). Any person individual licensed pursuant to this chapter to practice verbatim reporting.
- "(4) CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER (C.S.R.). A designation of certification given by the Alabama Court Reporters Association for its certified members.
- "(5) COURT REPORTER. Any person individual who is engaged in the practice of court reporting as a profession, including persons individuals who actually report judicial proceedings in courts and persons individuals who make verbatim records.
- "(6) COURT REPORTING. The making of a verbatim record by means of manual shorthand, machine shorthand, or closed microphone voice dictation silencer, or by other means of personal verbatim reporting of any testimony given under oath before, or for submission to, any court, referee, or court examiner or by any board, commission, or other body, or

1	in any other proceeding where a verbatim record is required.
2	The taking of a deposition is the making of a verbatim record.
3	"(7) CVR. Certified verbatim reporter.
4	"(8) FISCAL YEAR. October 1 through September 30.
5	"(9) FREELANCE COURT REPORTER. A court reporter who
6	works as an independent contractor, for a court reporting
7	agency, or both, who may be hired by a law firm, an attorney,
8	a corporation, or other organization.
9	" $\frac{(9)}{(10)}$ FUND. The Alabama Board of Court Reporting
10	Fund.
11	" $\frac{(10)}{(11)}$ NCRA. The National Court Reporters
12	Association.
13	" $\frac{(11)}{(12)}$ NVRA. The National Verbatim Reporters
14	Association.
15	"(13) OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER. A court reporter who
16	is appointed by a judge to produce and maintain a verbatim
17	record of the matters adjudicated by that judge.
18	"(12)(14) RPR. Registered professional reporter.
19	" <del>(13)</del> (15) SECRETARY. <del>A person</del> <u>An individual</u> selected
20	by the board to serve as secretary of the board.
21	"(16) SUPERVISING COURT REPORTER. A freelance court
22	reporter approved by the board to provide direct supervision
23	of the practice of court reporting by a temporary licensee.
24	"§34-8B-4.
25	"(a) There is created the Alabama Board of Court
26	Reporting. The board shall be operative within 60 days of June
27	1, 2006. ACRA shall provide administrative support to the

1	board until such time as the board employs sufficient
2	employees to implement and administer this chapter.
3	"(b) The board shall consist of seven members as
4	follows:
5	"(1) Four court reporters certified by ABCR, NCRA,
6	NVRA, or by the board, two of whom shall be employed in
7	official capacities and two of whom shall be employed in a
8	freelance setting.
9	"(2) Two members in good standing with the Alabama
10	State Bar Association.
11	"(3) One additional member.
12	"(c) Appointments to the board shall be made as
13	follows:
14	"(1) The Governor shall appoint one official court
15	reporter, one freelance court reporter, and one member of the
16	Alabama State Bar Association. ACRA, NCRA, NVRA, and the
17	Alabama State Bar Association shall respectively submit a list
18	of three names for each appointment to the Governor for
19	<del>consideration</del> .
20	"(2) The Lieutenant Governor shall appoint one
21	member of the Alabama State Bar Association from a list of
22	three names submitted by the Alabama State Bar Association.
23	"(3) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall
24	appoint one member who is an official court reporter from a

list of three names submitted by ACRA.

"(4) The Speaker of the House of Representatives shall appoint one member who is a freelance court reporter from a list of three names submitted by ACRA.

- "(5) The Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court shall appoint one member from a list of three names submitted by the Administrative Office of Courts.
- "(d) All members of the board shall be citizens of the United States and <u>residents of</u> the State of Alabama. The lists of names <u>for consideration for appointment to the board</u> shall be submitted <u>to the board</u> by the designated organizations <del>on or before June 1, 2006. The initial terms</del> shall begin January 1, 2007, and all appointments shall be made prior to January 1 of every year.
- "<del>(e) The initial members shall serve the following terms as designated by the Governor:</del>
  - "(1) Three members shall serve for two years.
  - "(2) Two members shall serve for three years.
- 18 "(3) Two members shall serve for four years.
  - "(f) Subsequent terms (e) Terms of office shall be for four years. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms. In the event of a vacancy, the appointing authority for the position shall fill the vacancy. Each member shall serve until his or her successor is duly appointed and qualified.
  - "(g) The membership of the board shall be inclusive and reflect the racial, gender, geographic, urban/rural, and economic diversity of the state. The board shall annually

report to the Legislature by the second legislative day of

each regular session to what extent the board has complied

with the diversity provisions provided for in this subsection.

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"(f) All appointing authorities shall coordinate their appointments to ensure the board membership reflects the racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural, and economic diversity of the state.

" $\frac{(h)}{(g)}$  At its first meeting each calendar year, the board shall elect a chair, vice chair, and secretary from its membership. No member shall be elected to serve more than two consecutive years in the same office.

"(i) After the initial appointments have been made, the board shall meet by January 2007, for the purpose of organizing and transacting business. Thereafter, the (h) The board shall meet not less than twice annually and as frequently as deemed necessary by the chair or a majority of the members for the purpose of transacting business. The board shall meet at such a time and place as designated by the board. A quorum shall consist of four members. Members of the board may participate in a meeting of the board by means of telephone conference, video conference, or similar communications equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting may hear each other at the same time. Participation by these means shall constitute presence in person at a meeting for all purposes. However, a majority of a quorum of the members of the board, shall be physically present at the location noticed and called for the meeting in

1	order to conduct any business or deliberation. Members of the
2	board may not utilize electronic communications except as in
3	compliance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act. Notice of board
4	meetings shall be provided in accordance with the
5	Alabama Open Meetings Act and telephone or video conference or
6	similar communications equipment shall also allow members of
7	the public the opportunity to simultaneously listen to or
8	observe the meetings.
9	"(i) The board shall employ and compensate
10	sufficient employees including, but not limited to, an
11	executive director, consultants, attorneys, and investigators,
12	under contract or on a part-time basis and without regard to
13	the state Merit System, to implement and administer this
14	<pre>chapter.</pre>
15	"(j) Board members shall receive the same travel
16	expenses and per diem as state employees pursuant to Article
17	2, commencing with Section 36-7-20, Chapter 7, Title 36. The
18	expenses shall be paid out of the funds of the board.
19	Reimbursement shall not be made if funds are insufficient.
20	"§34-8B-5.
21	"The board shall have all of the following duties
22	and responsibilities:
23	"(1) Act on matters concerning competency licensure
24	only and the process of granting, denying, suspending,
25	reinstating, and revoking a license.

1	"(2) Establish a procedure for the investigation of
2	complaints against licensed court reporters and for the
3	conduct of hearings in which complaints are heard.
4	"(3) Set a fee schedule for granting licenses and
5	renewals of licenses subject to the Alabama Administrative
6	Procedure Act.
7	"(4) Maintain a current register of licensed court
8	reporters and a current register of temporarily licensed court
9	reporters. Registers shall be matters of public record.
10	"(5) Maintain a complete record of all proceedings
11	of the board.
12	"(6) Adopt continuing education requirements <del>no</del>
13	later than October 1, 2007. Requirements shall be implemented
13 14	later than October 1, 2007. Requirements shall be implemented no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all
14	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all
14 15	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all courses approved by the Alabama State Bar for continuing legal
14 15 16	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all courses approved by the Alabama State Bar for continuing legal education.
14 15 16 17	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all courses approved by the Alabama State Bar for continuing legal education.  "(7) Determine the content of and administer
14 15 16 17	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all courses approved by the Alabama State Bar for continuing legal education.  "(7) Determine the content of and administer examinations to be given to applicants for licensure as
14 15 16 17 18	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all courses approved by the Alabama State Bar for continuing legal education.  "(7) Determine the content of and administer examinations to be given to applicants for licensure as certified court reporters and issue numbered licenses to
14 15 16 17 18 19	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all courses approved by the Alabama State Bar for continuing legal education.  "(7) Determine the content of and administer examinations to be given to applicants for licensure as certified court reporters and issue numbered licenses to applicants found qualified.
14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	no later than January 1, 2008, and that shall include all courses approved by the Alabama State Bar for continuing legal education.  "(7) Determine the content of and administer examinations to be given to applicants for licensure as certified court reporters and issue numbered licenses to applicants found qualified.  "(8) Maintain records of its proceedings and a

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<u>licensees.</u>

"§34-8B-6.

"(a) On the verified complaint of any individual that a court reporter has violated this chapter, the board shall investigate the complaint and may bring an action in its own name to hear and make a determination regarding the complaint. All complaints shall be in writing, signed by the person individual making the complaint, and addressed to the chair executive director of the board. All complaints shall contain the name and address of the person individual against whom the complaint is brought and a description of the conduct giving rise to the complaint. Complaints shall be submitted within 90 days of such conduct and a A copy of the complaint shall be provided to the <del>licensed</del> court reporter within five business days of receipt by the board. The copy shall be sent by certified mail or by such other means of delivery to ensure that the <del>licensed</del> court reporter charged in the complaint shall receive actual notice. After investigation of the charges, the board shall conduct a hearing at which time it may dismiss the charges, determine if a hearing is warranted, dismiss the complaint, issue a reprimand, or take other action to resolve the complaint by agreement. Any hearing deemed warranted shall be conducted in accordance with the Alabama Administrative Procedure Act, Chapter 22, Title 41. The board may issue subpoenas, compel the attendance of witnesses, and administer oaths to individuals giving testimony at hearings. Upon a finding that a violation has occurred, the board may refuse to issue a license, may impose a fine not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000) per violation, or may issue a

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reprimand or letter of instruction, place the licensee on probation, or revoke or suspend the license of the licensee.

"(b) The licensee may appeal a an adverse decision of the board imposing an administrative fine or revoking or suspending a license by submitting a written request to the board for reconsideration within 90 30 days following the adverse decision of the board. If no resolution is achieved, further appeals shall be submitted to the circuit court in the jurisdiction of the residence of the licensee. Appeals from a board decision following a request for reconsideration, or from a final decision of the board, shall lie with the Circuit Court of Montgomery County, in accordance with the Alabama Administrative Procedure Act. The filing of the request for reconsideration shall be at the option of either party and may not be deemed as a prerequisite to, or hindrance of, the right of a party to judicial review of a board decision in accordance with the Alabama Administrative Procedure Act.

"(c) Any licensee whose application for licensure or for renewal of licensure was denied, or whose license was revoked, may reapply after 12 months have elapsed. The board may then reissue a license or rescind any disciplinary action if a majority of the members vote in favor of the action.

"\$34-8B-8.

"After January 1, 2007, any person individual who undertakes or attempts to undertake the practice of court reporting for remuneration without first having procured a license, or who knowingly presents or files false information

with the board for the purpose of obtaining a license or who violates this chapter, upon conviction, shall be guilty of a Class C Class A misdemeanor. A person An individual who is not licensed may not bring or maintain an action to recover fees for court reporting services that he or she performed in violation of this chapter. Whenever it appears to the board that any court reporter individual has violated this chapter, the board may, in its own name, petition the circuit court of the county in which the violation occurred may apply to any court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin the violation. Injunctions under this section shall be applied for in accordance with the civil remedies and procedures provided in Article 10, commencing with Section 6-6-500, of Chapter 6, Title 6, and the Alabama Rules of Civil Procedure. An application for an injunction under this section shall be in addition to and not in lieu of all penalties and other remedies provided in this chapter or any right of criminal prosecution otherwise provided by law.

"§34-8B-10.

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"(a) (1) To be licensed as a court reporter, an applicant shall be a United States citizen or, if not a citizen of the United States, a person who is legally present in the United States with appropriate documentation from the federal government, and shall satisfy either of the following requirements:

"a. Pass both pass the Written Knowledge Examination administered by the board, ACRA, NCRA, or NVRA, and shall pass an Alabama skills examination or provide.

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"b. Provide documentation of having passed the NCRA Registered Professional Reporter Examination or NVRA CVR Examination.

"(2) The board shall examine or establish, or both, examination and testing procedures to enable the board to ascertain the competency of applicants for licensure. Each such skills examination shall be given at least twice each calendar year. Applications for licensure shall be signed and sworn by the applicants and submitted on forms furnished by the board. An applicant who furnishes the board with satisfactory proof of graduation from a court reporting program or its equivalent shall, upon payment of a reasonable fee in an amount determined by the board, be examined by the board. All applicants who are found qualified to engage in the practice of court reporting pursuant to this chapter and proof of passage of the required examinations, shall be issued a license as a certified court reporter and an identifying number. A court reporter shall have their license available for inspection on every assignment. The license shall be valid until September 30th of the year of its issuance.

"(b) No certified court reporter may authorize the use of his or her license number on any transcript not produced through his or her personal effort or supervision, or

both. Violation of this subsection may be grounds for license suspension or revocation.

"(c) The board shall approve at least two reporter examinations each year and may hold such additional examinations as are necessary. The secretary shall give public notice of the time and place of each examination at least 120 days prior to the date set for the examination. Any person desiring to take the examination shall file his or her application with the board at least 30 days prior to the date of the examination. The preparation, administration, and grading of the examination shall be governed by the rules prescribed by the board, but the board may engage ACRA to conduct the examination under the supervision of the board. Upon determining the results of the examination, the board shall notify each applicant as to whether the applicant has passed the examination. Notification shall be by written notice mailed to the applicant by certified mail to the applicant's address as indicated on the application.

"§34-8B-12.

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"The annual fees for licensure pursuant to this chapter shall be established by the board and shall cover a 12-month period beginning October 1 of each year. All fees collected by the board shall be paid into the State Treasury to the credit of the Board of Court Reporting Fund which is hereby created. Moneys Monies in the fund shall be subject to withdrawal only upon warrant of the state Comptroller to be issued upon certification of the secretary. Any funds

remaining in the fund at the end of each fiscal year in excess of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000), shall be available to the board to provide for the education and training of court reporters. At all times the board shall retain a sum not in excess of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000), to meet any emergency which may affect the efficient operation of the board. No funds shall be withdrawn or expended except as budgeted and allocated pursuant to this chapter and only in amounts as stipulated in the general appropriations bill or other appropriations bills.

"\$34-8B-13.

"(a) Each person individual licensed pursuant to this chapter shall apply for renewal of his or her license pursuant to dates established by the board. A renewal fee in an amount determined by the board shall be paid and thereupon the board shall issue a numbered license establishing that the holder is entitled to practice court reporting for the period determined by the board. The board shall require specific continuing education as a condition for license renewal. The board may provide for the late renewal of a license which has lapsed and may require the payment of a late fee or an examination, or both, prior to issuing a renewal license. It shall be unlawful for any individual to practice or attempt to practice court reporting in this state during the time his or her license to practice has lapsed, and upon a finding that a violation has occurred, the individual shall be subject to

1	disciplinary	action	by	the	board	pursuant	to	the	Alabama
2	Administration	je Proce	-d111	re Ad	¬+				

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"(b) Failure to renew a lapsed license within the period for late renewal established by board rule shall result in an expired license. An expired license may not be reinstated until the applicant has paid all delinquent fees and satisfied all certification requirements, including passage of the Written Knowledge Examination and skills examination as required by the board, and any additional requirements imposed by board rule. The holder of an expired license shall cease and desist the practice of court reporting immediately upon the expiration of his or her license, and the board may not be held liable for lost income to the holder of the expired license or to his or her employer. Upon a finding that a violation has occurred, an individual who practices court reporting under an expired license shall be subject to disciplinary action by the board pursuant to the Alabama Administrative Procedure Act.

"(c) Licensees shall notify the board in writing of any change of in their name, address, or employer within 30 days of the change. Failure to notify the board of such change may subject a licensee to disciplinary action imposed pursuant to board rule.

"\$34-8B-15.

"(a) Commencing on August 1, 2012, any person (1) Any individual who is a graduate of a court reporting program may apply to the board to receive a temporary license to practice

Τ	as a court reporter <del>from the board. Application for the</del>
2	temporary graduate license shall be made to the board, on
3	forms approved by the board, and the payment of a fee in an
4	amount determined by the board. The temporary license shall be
5	valid for 18 months from the date of issuance. An application
6	for a temporary license shall be received by the board within
7	30 days after graduation from a school of court reporting and
8	may be subject to review and approval by the board, or a
9	subcommittee of the board, before a temporary license is
10	issued. The board may issue a six-month temporary license to
11	any applicant who satisfies all of the following requirements:
12	"a. Submits proof to the board of graduation from a
13	school of court reporting.
14	"b. Submits proof to the board of passage of at
15	least one section of the skills examination required under
16	<u>Section 34-8B-10.</u>
17	"c. Submits to the board completed application forms
18	for both the applicant and the supervising court reporter, on
19	forms approved by the board.
20	"d. Submits to the board payment of temporary
21	license fees and application fees for both the applicant and
22	the supervising court reporter, as established by rule of the
23	board.
24	"(2) A temporary licensee shall take the remaining
25	sections of the examination when offered by ACRA, NCRA, or
26	NVRA and provide proof thereof to the board. Upon passage of
27	all sections of the examination, a temporary licensee shall be

1	required	d to	apply	for	full	licensure	in	accordance	with
2	Section	34-	8B-10.						

"(b) The holder of a temporary license may only provide court reporting services under the direct supervision of a freelance court reporter, who shall assume responsibility for the practice of court reporting by the temporary licensee.

The board, by rule, shall establish the responsibilities and qualifications for a supervising court reporter and requirements governing the practice of court reporting by a temporary licensee. Any violation of this chapter or board rule by a temporary licensee may also subject the supervising court reporter to disciplinary action by the board pursuant to the Alabama Administrative Procedure Act.

"(c) A temporary license shall be renewable only once, for an additional six-month period, if the temporary licensee fails to pass the examination for full licensure by the end of the initial six-month licensure period.

"(b)(d) In the event that a temporary license expires at the end of the 12-month period without the temporary licensee having passed the examination for full licensure, court reporting services by the temporary licensee shall immediately cease and desist immediately upon the expiration of the temporary license the practice of court reporting, and the board may not be held liable for lost income to the temporary licensee or to the court reporting firm employer of the temporary licensee.

1	"(e) A temporary licensee may not serve as an
2	official court reporter, and an official court reporter may
3	not serve as a supervising court reporter.
4	"§34-8B-16.
5	"The board by rule shall establish an inactive
6	status for <del>persons</del> <u>individuals</u> who are not actively engaged in
7	the practice of court reporting, including related
8	requirements and fees.
9	"§34-8B-17.
10	"All moneys monies collected pursuant to this
11	chapter shall be deposited into the Board of Court Reporting
12	Fund. All expenses incurred by the board in implementing and
13	administering this chapter shall be paid out of the fund
14	provided that the expenses of the board shall not be in excess
15	of the moneys monies in the fund. The board may charge and
16	collect the following fees which shall be deposited into the
17	fund:
18	"(1) An A license application fee for any temporary
19	<del>or regular license</del> .
20	" <del>(2) An examination fee.</del>
21	" <del>(3)</del> (2) A <u>license</u> renewal fee <del>for any temporary or</del>
22	<del>regular license</del> .
23	" $\frac{(4)}{(3)}$ A reinstatement fee for any application for
24	reinstatement of a temporary or regular license which has been
25	placed on inactive status, revoked, or suspended.
26	" $\frac{(5)}{(4)}$ A fee for the renewal of a license after the
27	due date which shall be increased 20 percent for each month or

1	fraction thereof that payment is delayed, unless the delay is
2	caused by conditions resulting from additional requirements
3	imposed by the board. Notwithstanding the foregoing,
4	delinquency of more than 60 days shall result in revocation of
5	licensure an expired license.
6	" $(6)$ $(5)$ A change of information fee.
7	" $\frac{(7)}{(6)}$ Necessary administrative fees including, but
8	not limited to, reasonable costs for copying, labels, and
9	lists, replacing licenses, and verifying licensure."
10	Section 2. This act shall become effective on the
11	first day of the third month following its passage and
12	approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.