

HB 2108 -- FOOD SECURITY TASK FORCE

SPONSOR: Pierson Jr.

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Agriculture Policy by a vote of 21 to 0.

This bill establishes the "Missouri Food Security Task Force", which consists of 22 members, including two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the remaining members are specified in the bill. The Director of the Department of Agriculture is to ensure that the membership of the task force reflects the diversity of the state. Members serve without compensation but will be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses while attending meetings of the task force.

The task force shall hold its first meeting within two months of the effective date of the bill. The mission of the task force is to determine the ability of individuals throughout the state to access healthy food and identify populations and areas in which access to food is limited or uncertain; identify ways to connect resources and individuals in an effort to ensure food security; evaluate the impact of tax increment financing projects and restrictive deed covenants imposed on grocery retailers on creating and prolonging food deserts; and evaluate the potential impacts of online food retail on food insecurity in the state.

The task force must report a summary of its activities and recommendations to the General Assembly before August 28, 2021 and terminates on January 1, 2022.

This bill is similar to HB 1201 (2019).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that 12% of all Missourians are in food insecure situations. One in five people and one in three kids in rural Missouri go hungry. Food insecurity is not an urban or rural issue; it affects all of the state. The task force established in this bill would be able to investigate better ways those residents could access the resources available.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Pierson Jr.; Tosha Phonix, Missouri Coalition For The Environment; KC Healthy Kids; Missouri Farm Bureau; Keyana Cooke, Empower Missouri; Conservation Federation of Missouri; Missouri Soybean Association; Missouri Farmers Care; Missouri Cattlemen's Association; Missouri Grocers Association; and D. Scott Penman.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that 865,000 people in the state are affected by food insecurity and that due to lack of transportation or a disability, 13% of Missouri seniors are food insecure.

Testifying on the bill were Jessica Bax, Department of Health and Senior Services and Bill McKelvey, University of Missouri.