

HB 308 -- HOUSES OF WORSHIP

SPONSOR: Kelley (127)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Government Accountability by a vote of 10 to 4. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 5 with 1 voting present.

This bill says houses of worship will be exempt from any social distancing requirements contained in any order relating to the prevention of the spread of infectious diseases issued by the Department of Health and Senior Services. Social distancing requirements includes any limitation on the number of people who can gather in a single space or any requirement to maintain a certain amount of space between individuals.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill will give the authority to the church to decide what they should do during an emergency. The bill will protect churches' ability to stay open for Missourians if they believe they should.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Kelley.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the bill violates the establishment clause as the language in the bill takes a side preferring religion.

Testifying against the bill were Arnie Dienoff; Nikolas Nartowicz, Americans United for Separation of Church and State; Ryan Jayne, Freedom From Religion Foundation; Governmental Services, Inc; Brian Kaylor, Word&Way; Churchnet; and American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.