



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 1495</b>		DATE: <b>1/9/2024</b>	
COMMITTEE: <b>Veterans</b>			
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>ARNIE C."HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: <b>arniedienoff@yahoo.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/9/2024 11:12 PM</b>	
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>			

The Veterans Commission MUST Review Provisions of the "Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019." After review and Collaboration with the Department of Mental Health, Staff MUST Provide Recommendations on Programs and Assistance to Prevent Suicide. In addition, the Veteran's Commission MUST File A Report with the Department of Public Safety. We do NOT want the Report to sit on a shelf, collect dust and not be implemented, because of lack of Legislative Appropriations and being fully-funded. ALL Missourians Matter and we MUST look at the entire picture of suicide by Police Officers, Sheriff's Deputies, Fire Fighters, Paramedics, Students in Middle School, Students in High Schools. It breaks my heart that another human-being commits suicide each and every week ALL across Missouri on too much frequency. Suicide happens in Urban Areas, Rural Counties, Suburban, Large Cities and Small Towns. It breaks my heart of the damage that affects Missouri Families and Communities. This is a systemic problem that NEEDS to be addressed in ALL angles and across ALL factions of our State Society. The Improvement Act and Report Shall NOT sit idle, but let's see some action and prevention!



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>JASON HOWE</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-338-9204</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>K9S ON THE FRONT LINE</b>		TITLE: <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>3157 HIGHWAY W</b>			
CITY: <b>BONNOTS MILL</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65016</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/9/2024 12:00 AM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>JENNIFER CARTER DOCHLER</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-345-7751</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH</b>		TITLE: <b>DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>4254 VISTA AVENUE</b>			
CITY: <b>ST. LOUIS</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63110</b>
EMAIL: <b>jdochler@mffh.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/9/2024 6:35 AM</b>	

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Missouri Foundation for Health is an independent nonprofit foundation whose mission is to eliminate underlying causes of health inequities, transform systems, and enable Missourians to thrive. Like you, we want Missouri to be a healthy place to live and work. The Foundation serves 84 counties across Missouri and the city of St. Louis. We are submitting information-only testimony that might be helpful for the committee to consider. One of our current strategic initiatives focuses on firearm injury and death which includes veteran firearm suicide. We would be happy to provide additional information from either our staff who oversee the initiative or one of our related funded projects. Suicide is a public health crisis in the U.S., with rates rising more than 30% in 25 states between 1999 and 2016. Rates have increased among both sexes, all racial and ethnic groups, all age groups under 75, and in all geographic settings. In Missouri, suicide rates have grown even faster than the national average. At 61%, firearms are the leading means of suicide in Missouri by a wide margin. Despite the role firearms play in many suicides in the region, strategies to address firearm suicide are absent or underdeveloped within statewide and community-based suicide prevention plans. Firearms are a uniquely lethal method of suicide. In Missouri, six out of every 10 suicides involved a firearm, with approximately 85% of attempts ending in death. Research shows that a person can think about suicide for an extended period, but the decision to act in a brief and vulnerable moment can happen in less than one hour. Having access to a firearm at this time can determine whether someone lives or dies. Through our strategic initiative, we are working to reduce firearm suicides in targeted populations, such as veterans. We are doing this through promoting effective messaging that shifts the narrative about firearms and suicide, and increasing the focus on this issue within statewide comprehensive suicide prevention work that is in development.



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<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>PAUL KIRCHHOFF</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI VETERANS COMMISSION</b>		TITLE: <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>205 JEFFERSON ST.</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/9/2024 12:00 AM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>SARAH ANDERSON</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MOST POLICY INITIATIVE</b>		TITLE: <b>HUMAN SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY FELLOW</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>238 E HIGH ST</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
EMAIL: <b>sarah@mostpolicyinitiative.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/8/2024 5:33 PM</b>	

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I am a the human services and public safety fellow for MOST Policy Initiative. We are a non-partisan organization that provides research resources for the Missouri state legislature. I am providing informational testimony on the Science Notes Suicide Risks in Veterans and Veteran Homelessness. Risk of suicide is higher among veterans than the general population. This risk has increased over time. Missouri has the 8th highest veteran suicide rate in the nation. There are a variety of factors that increase suicide risk including mental health issues, losing a sense of purpose and belonging, substance use disorders, issues with finances, relationships, and legal issues. Several of these factors also put veterans at a higher risk for homelessness and incarceration. The VA has studied programs that decrease suicide risk by increasing access to mental health care services. There are also programs implemented by states that seek to reduce suicide risk by educating the public and professionals on suicide risk, placing extra protections on veterans, and increasing veterans' access to mental health services.