



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2402		DATE: 2/7/2024	
COMMITTEE: Emerging Issues			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C."HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 11:59 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: HEATHER BARRY		PHONE NUMBER: 816-505-4820	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SYNERGY SERVICES		TITLE: PROGRAM MANAGER	
ADDRESS: 400 E. 6TH STREET			
CITY: PARKVILLE		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64152
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 12:00 AM	

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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JENNA ROBERSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: jroberson1181@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/4/2024 3:13 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JESSICA M. HILL		PHONE NUMBER: 573-335-7745	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SAFE HOUSE OF SOUTHEAST MISSOURI		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 2350 INDEPENDENCE			
CITY: CAPE GIRARDEAU		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63703
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JULIE DONELON		PHONE NUMBER: 816-285-1325	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: METROPOLITAN ORGANIZATION TO COUNTER SEXUAL ASSAULT (MOCSA)		TITLE: PRESIDENT & CEO	
ADDRESS: 3100 BROADWAY, SUITE 400			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64111
EMAIL: jdanelon@mocsa.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 11:54 AM
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Proponent Testimony: House Bill 2402 Committee: Emerging Issues Committee Chairman Hardwick and Members of the Emerging Issues Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony regarding HB 2406. My name is Julie Donelon, and I am the President & CEO at the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA). On behalf of MOCSA, I am providing written testimony in support of House Bill 2402 that would allow the court to enter a judgment of dissolution of marriage or legal separation if a person is pregnant. MOCSA is the rape crisis center serving the greater Kansas City Metropolitan Community, including Cass, Clay, Jackson, and Platte counties in Missouri. Our mission is to improve the lives of those impacted by sexual abuse and assault and to prevent sexual violence in our community. MOCSA provides advocacy and counseling services to individuals and families who have been impacted by sexual violence and we work to prevent violence through our education, prevention, and outreach programs. We at MOCSA know too well the danger facing women trapped in a sexually violent marriage. Approximately 10-14% of married women are raped by their husbands. Of women who were raped by an intimate partner, 30% experienced a form of reproductive coercion by the same partner. Specifically, about 20% reported that their partner had tried to get them pregnant when they did not want to or tried to stop them from using birth control. About 23% reported their partner refused to use a condom. Abusers use rape and reproductive coercion to maintain power and control and keep their partner from leaving the marriage. By sabotaging birth control, coercing someone into pregnancy, and by forcing rapid repeat pregnancy, the barriers to and danger of leaving an abusive relationship increase exponentially. Our partners at the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence share that "homicide is the leading cause of death of pregnant women". Research shows that women in the US are more likely to be murdered during pregnancy or soon after childbirth than to die from the three leading obstetric causes of maternal death --high blood pressure disorders, hemorrhage, or sepsis (The BMJ, 2022). In Missouri, the current restriction on divorce during pregnancy creates an unnecessary obstacle and delays a woman's ability to leave an abusive relationship. HB 2402 bill will support survivors of domestic and sexual violence in leaving abusive relationships at a critical and dangerous time. I am grateful for Rep. Aune for introducing this bill that will save the lives of women and allow them to safely leave an abusive marriage. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on this bill. Sincerely, Julie Donelon, MSW President & CEO Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault (MOCSA)



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KORTNIE HUDDLESTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: kortniehuddleston@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 6:58 PM
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I strongly urge you to support this bill. It is shocking in 2024 that pregnancy status prevents Missourians from dissolving a marriage or becoming legally separated. This forces pregnant Missourians to potentially stay in abusive and dangerous relationships and essentially holds them hostage. This also potentially allows abusive partners to become pregnant to prevent a divorce. A mother does not have to be married to birth a happy and health child. This is an outdated and offensive train of thought. On the contrary, an unstable and loveless marriage actually harms a child's development. Bring Missouri into the 21st century by supporting this bill.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LAURA BURKHARDT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: laburkhardt3@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 9:50 AM
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Thank you to Representative Aune for bringing House Bill 2402 forward and to the committee chair and members for hearing this crucial bill. Homicide is the leading cause of death in pregnant women in the US. Women in the US are more likely to be murdered during pregnancy or soon after childbirth than from the three leading obstetric causes of maternal death (high blood pressure disorders, hemorrhage, or sepsis). The overwhelming majority of these preventable pregnancy-associated homicides are linked to the lethal combination of intimate partner violence and firearms. Not allowing a pregnant woman to divorce an abusive spouse often increases the risk of preterm birth and other pregnancy complications. Studies show that intimate partner violence increases the risk for delayed or nonexistent prenatal care, because abusive partners are preventing women from leaving their home, or because a woman is missing appointments because of injuries or fear of abuse being discovered due evidence of injuries. IPV during pregnancy has also been found to lead to higher rates of preterm labor and low birth weight, as well as higher rates of miscarriage and abortion. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence reports that roughly 25% of women who are being physically or sexually abused by their partners also report reproductive coercion, or being forced to become pregnant. This happens by a hole being poked in a condom, replacing/hiding birth control pills, and even marital rape. This is a method that is often used by abusive partners to force women to stay in an abusive relationship, primarily in states where finalizing divorce while pregnant is not legal. We have a lethal combination embedded in our laws in Missouri. Pregnant women cannot finalize divorce while pregnant, abusive partners convicted of misdemeanor domestic abuse retain their rights to own firearms, and abortion is banned. This deadly combination puts the lives of Missouri women in imminent danger. There are many changes that need to be made. House Bill 2402 is an excellent place to start. I strongly urge the committee to vote in support of HB 2402. Thank you.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MARION MILLER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: mjm314@charter.net	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/5/2024 2:38 PM

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If your marriage is bad enough to end, a baby will not help the situation. If abuse is taking place in addition, the sooner the abused can be safe the better.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: MATTHEW HUFFMAN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-4161	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE		TITLE: CHIEF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER	
ADDRESS: 217 OSCAR DRIVE. SUITE A			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: matthew.lane.huffman@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 7:05 AM	
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My name is Matthew Huffman and I am the Chief Public Affairs Officer at the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. We are a statewide membership association comprised of domestic and sexual violence service providers. Mr. Chairman, and members of this Committee, thank you for your time. House Bill 2402 is appropriately being heard in the Emerging Issues Committee, and I want to thank Rep. Aune for bringing more attention to this particular issue. Currently a pregnant woman can file for a divorce, but a that divorce isn't not finalized until after the birth of the child. Experiencing domestic violence during pregnancy increases the likelihood of pregnancy complications and poor health outcomes for both mom and baby. Women who are abused during pregnancy are more likely to receive no prenatal care, or delay care until later than recommended, because the abusive partner is controlling access to prenatal care. Maternal exposure to domestic violence is associated with significantly increased risk of low birth weight and preterm birth, and infants exposed to domestic violence can show signs of trauma that include problem seating, sleep disturbances and higher irritability, and delays in development. Pregnancy can be an especially risky time for a woman experiencing domestic violence, as many women report that abuse started or intensified when they became pregnant. Last year the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services released a multi-year review of maternal mortality in our state. That review identified homicide as the third leading cause of death among pregnancy-related deaths. In each case of identified as a pregnancy-related homicide, the perpetrator was a current or former intimate partner. I have heard stories from domestic and sexual violence advocates, and family law attorneys, who have had to deliver the news to a pregnant survivor that they will not be granted a divorce from their abuser until after the child is born. That news never gets easier to deliver, because it is a devastating reality for domestic violence victims. HB2402 contains the provision, "Pregnancy status shall not prevent the court from entering a judgment of dissolution of marriage or legal separation." That single line can have a tremendous impact on the health and safety of women and infants. It is not hyperbole to say this legislation can prevent pregnancy-related deaths in our state. MOCADSV supports HB2402. I urge the Committee to vote this bill out, and send it to the floor for debate.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: mdreyer93@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 6:57 PM
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I strongly urge you to support this bill. It is shocking in 2024 that pregnancy status prevents Missourians from dissolving a marriage or becoming legally separated. This forces pregnant Missourians to potentially stay in abusive and dangerous relationships and essentially holds them hostage. This also potentially allows abusive partners to become pregnant to prevent a divorce. A mother does not have to be married to birth a happy and health child. This is an outdated and offensive train of thought. On the contrary, an unstable and loveless marriage actually harms a child's development. Bring Missouri into the 21st century by supporting this bill.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: REBEKAH PERRY		PHONE NUMBER: 816-505-4820	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SYNERGY SERVICES		TITLE: EDUCATION MANAGER	
ADDRESS: 400 E. 6TH ST.			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64158
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: RYAN TINKER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: ryantinker27@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/5/2024 12:54 PM

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Either party in a marriage should have the right to terminate the marriage and it should not matter if the woman is pregnant or not. It makes zero sense to trap a woman in a marriage that may be abusive or dangerous just because she is pregnant.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SARA BRAMMER, PH.D.		PHONE NUMBER: 816-505-4905	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SYNERGY SERVICES		TITLE: VICE PRESIDENT OF DV SERVICES	
ADDRESS: 400 E. 6TH STREET			
CITY: PARKVILLE		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64152
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SUSAN GIBSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: Onesuegibson@protonmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/2/2024 8:39 PM
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Please support this long overdue bill.			



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: VANESSA WELLBERY		PHONE NUMBER: 314-531-7526	
REPRESENTING: ADVOCATES OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF THE ST. LOUIS REGION & SOUTHWEST MISSOURI		TITLE: VICE PRESIDENT OF POLICY & ADVOCACY	
ADDRESS: 4251 FOREST PARK AVE			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63108
EMAIL: vanessa.wellbery@ppslr.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/7/2024 7:12 PM
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