

HB 116 -- PILOT PROGRAM FOR MEDIA LITERACY AND CRITICAL THINKING

SPONSOR: Murphy

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 17 to 1, with 1 voting present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill establishes the "Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Act". The bill defines "media literacy" to include concepts such as, but not limited to: an individual's ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and participate with all forms of media, including news in print and social media content, and recognize bias and stereotypes in media, as well as Internet safety.

This bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish a "Media Literacy and Critical Thinking" Pilot Program for the 2026-27 and 2027-28 school years. Between five and seven diverse schools will be selected by DESE to participate in the Pilot Program as specified in the bill.

The Program will address media literacy, develop strategies for student learning in classroom curricula, and demonstrate various literacy strategies used. Pilot Program schools must provide a report to DESE before August 1, 2028, and before January 1, 2029, DESE must compile and submit a summary report to the General Assembly. The Pilot Program terminates June 30, 2028.

This section expires December 31, 2028.

This bill is the same as HB 1513 (2024) and similar to HB 492 (2023).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this language is supported by classroom teachers and librarians across the State because it is helping students develop critical skills necessary in today's media centric society. Teaching the various nuances of media literacy and giving students tools to ensure that they have healthy social media interactions is important.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Murphy; Sarah Colbert, Missouri Association of School Librarians; CN Missouri, Missouri Press Association; Aligned; Julie Smith; Sarah Colbert; Missouri State Teachers Association; Missouri National Education Association; and Missouri Press Association.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the toolkit that accompanies the program is full of woke language and if implemented

would allow bureaucrats to indoctrinate students without parental information.

Testifying in person against the bill was Amorvine.

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