

HB 124 -- FUNDING OF BASIC CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES

SPONSOR: Veit

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 10 to 0.

Currently, the "Basic Civil Legal Services Fund" is set to expire on December 31, 2025. The money in the Fund is used to provide legal representation to eligible low-income persons in civil matters. This bill repeals that expiration date. The bill also corrects an incorrect reference to a provision in the Missouri Constitution.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this removes the sunset provision for the basic legal funding mechanism for Legal Services. Legal Services assists people, many of whom are low income, in many areas, including in matters related to housing, restraining orders, divorces, and other areas. One witness gave examples of cases she tried regarding housing. The cases involved assisting tenants with bad landlords. Those working for Legal Services are grateful they are able to do the work they do and they appreciate the funding that allows them to continue providing their services. They have had 17,750 completed cases in 2024 across all the four legal aid organizations around the State.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Veit; Paula S. Green, Legal Services of Southern Missouri; Mark Rhoads, Legal Services of Missouri ; Meghan Wheeler, Legal Services of Southern Missouri; Arnie Dienoff; and Kirsten Dunham, Mid-Missouri Legal Services.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

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.