

HCS#2 HB 495 -- PUBLIC SAFETY

SPONSOR: Christ

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Crime and Public Safety by a vote of 13 to 6. Voted "Do Pass with HCS #2" by the Standing Committee on Legislative Review by a vote of 7 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative by a vote of 8 to 2.

See the Summary Sheet for a comparison of the versions of HB 495.

The following is a summary of the testimony from the Standing Committee on Legislative Review committee hearing on February 6, 2025. The testimony was based on the HCS HB 495.

PROPOSERS: The sponsor testified that he filed the introduced version of this bill on the first day of pre-filing. Since then he has been working with the Governor's Office and the Attorney General's Office to make this into a more comprehensive crime bill. The sponsor went on to discuss proposed changes to the HCS.

Testifying in person for the bill was Representative Christ

There were no opposition voiced to the committee.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the Standing Committee on Crime and Public Safety committee hearing on January 22, 2025. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this would put a local board in place to take control of the police department in the city of St. Louis. It is marketed as State control, but the commission members will be local citizens as well as the mayor of the city. There are reports that crime in the city is down, but there is some adjusting of the numbers, such as consolidating crimes into one, to make it look like crime is down. Since the board was removed, the city has lost over 40,000 residents, and many businesses and investors have left the area and they do not want to invest in the city. There is an argument that Kansas City has similar crime statistics and it is under the control of a State board, but that city has a much larger population than the city of St. Louis. Local control for the last 11 years has clearly failed. Facilities are collapsing, officers are leaving because they know they are working in one of the most dangerous cities in the country. The board would create stability and uniformity within the city. It is really important to increase the penalties for the offense of endangering the welfare of a child

and for the dealing in fentanyl and carfentanil. The Mayor of St. Louis has full-time officers guarding her and her son, and that is a waste of taxpayer dollars, especially when you hear that there are sometimes two officers in a district per shift. Many businesses, like radio stations and news stations, have left the city for the county. Almost all 200+ members of the ethical society of police are in support of State control of the police department. The 7% pay increase went to the officers who are in years 1-20 of service, but a person who has been there 20 years or more got 2%. The civilian personnel of the police department did not get a raise. There have been great strides made to increase the pay of officers in the city but there is still a \$12,000 difference between the pay of top officers in the city versus the top officers in the county, and it takes seven years longer to get there in the city. The good thing about moving the police department back under the control of a board is it brings the department back under the auspices of the Attorney General's office and the legal expense fund.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Christ; Arnie Dienoff; Jane Dueker, St. Louis Police Officers Assoc., Stl County Police Officers Assoc. & Mo Fop; Todd Scott, Missouri Attorney General's Office; Byron Keelin, Freedom Principle Of Mo; Christopher Schoeman, St. Louis County Police Association; Jay Schroeder, Missouri Fop; Steve Pelton, Missouri Sheriffs United; Donny Walters, Ethical Society Of Police; Joe Steiger, St. Louis Police Officers' Association.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this legislation will not make St Louis safer and it will undermine the efforts the city has already been making. Crime is down in the city and it's lower than pre-pandemic numbers. The clearance rate has increased from less than 40% to 70%. Under State control in 2006, St. Louis was the most dangerous city in the country. St. Louis is in the middle of a renaissance. The Mayor holds town hall meetings with the business owners who have decided to lay roots in the city and, as a result, these businesses have decided to renew their leases. The city has not taken any money away from the police department. The city holds events for youth to help keep them away from violence and crime and to reduce the chances that they will recidivate. If the police department has asked for additional funding, it has received it. The crime in St. Louis is down but not acceptable. Point one percent of the population of St. Louis commits most of the crime, and the demographic is 31-year-old black males. Red flag laws would help decrease crime in the city, as would laws that require a CCW to carry.

Testifying in person against the bill were Maggie Edmondson, Abortion Action Missouri; Mayor Tishaura O. Jones, City Of St.

Louis; Robert J. Tracy, SLMPD; James Figueroa-Robnett Jr., Missouri NAACP Conference; Adolphus Pruitt, St. Louis City Naacp; Precious Jones , Breaking Generational Poverty Foundation.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill submitted their testimony in writing.

Testifying in person on the bill was Charles Andy Arnold, Kansas City Board Of Police Commissioners; Kansas City Police Department.

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.