

HCS HB 591 -- REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

SPONSOR: West

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Crime and Public Safety by a vote of 17 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 591.

This bill creates provisions related to law enforcement "clearance rates", defined in the bill as the rate at which law enforcement agencies clear an "offense by arrest" or an "offense cleared by exceptional means", also defined in the bill.

This bill requires law enforcement agencies in the State to collect data documenting clearance rates and report the data on a monthly basis to the Department of Public Safety beginning on January 1, 2026. The Department must publish the information quarterly on its website by the 15th of the month following the close of the preceding quarter. The Department must report the information to the Governor, the Missouri Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission, the chair of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence and the chair of the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee by July 1, 2027, and every July after. The report must also be available on the Department's website.

The bill requires a probation officer to report a probation violation to the court that placed the offender on probation and to the office of the prosecuting attorney by the last day of the calendar month in which the violation occurred.

The bill creates the "Missouri Violent Crime Clearance Grant Program" within the Department of Public Safety, the purpose of which is to improve law enforcement strategies and initiatives aimed at increasing violent crime clearance rates. The bill describes eligible uses for grant funding as well as to which law enforcement agencies the Department will give priority in awarding grants. Agencies awarded grant funding must report to the Department annually on the activities carried out to reduce violent crime and improve clearance rates during the preceding fiscal year, as specified in the bill.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this creates transparency for police departments to provide data on case clearing rates, which will be published publicly, and it establishes a grant program for agencies to get money if they comply with these data reporting requirements. The Department of Public Safety will make the determination for how much money it will take to get the grant program funded properly, and the program itself will not be operational without appropriation. Missouri's clearance rate has declined by 13 percentage points in the last decade. Missouri currently has about a 60% clearance rate, which means a big number of crimes are being committed without consequence. This signals to criminals that Missouri is a good place to commit crimes. Low clearance rates do not reflect poorly on law enforcement agencies, but these agencies are strained while doing all they can to solve these crimes. Resources are critical for solving crimes, and this would be a good avenue to provide the agencies to have the necessary resources to help solve these crimes. This will provide the ability to update their technology to assist in the solving of crime. Arkansas passed this, and this is being worked on in Tennessee and Texas in this legislative session. Omaha, Nebraska, implemented a community-based strategy and it went from a 32% clearance rate to 100% in a period of years.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative West; Jason Olin, Niskanen Center; Empower Missouri; Arnie Dienoff.

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.