

HB 742 -- EXPENDITURES BY STATE DEPARTMENTS

SPONSOR: Baker

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 10 to 4.

This bill prohibits funds from any State department being used for intradepartmental programs, staffing, or other initiatives related to "diversity, equity, and inclusion" or similar initiatives that promote preferential treatment based on certain characteristics, concepts such as oppression as the sole cause of disparities, collective guilt ideologies, intersectional or divisive identity activism, and the limiting of freedom of conscience, thought, or speech.

State departments are not prohibited from following Federal and State employment and antidiscrimination laws, or complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

This bill prohibits State departments from mandating, requiring, or incentivizing private sector employers to implement "diversity, equity, and inclusion" programs or initiatives as a condition for receiving a State contract.

This bill is the same as HB 2619 (2024).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the use of state taxpayer money on DEI-related initiatives at various state departments is wasteful and does not produce any meaningful results. Supporters further say that DEI-related initiatives have devolved into a situation in which people are punished for voicing opinions, that unnecessarily divides people into groups, and puts people in fear of speaking out against such initiatives. Instead, DEI actually results in things like racism and sexism, because such initiatives are set up to purposefully divide people.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Baker; Byron Keelin, Freedom Principle Mo; Opportunity Solutions Project; Jennifer Houcek; Shannon Santschi; Arnie Dienoff.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that citizens of this state and country are not treated equally under the law, most especially historically disadvantaged minorities. Opponents further say that DEI-related initiatives are put in place for the benefit of all people, regardless of skin color or gender, and to ensure that those who do not have a voice can have a support system. Without DEI, people in social and economic need will

suffer, because DEI-related initiatives help to train individuals who can reach out to those who are marginalized. Opponents further say that DEI is simply a device that seeks to eliminate discriminatory practices in government.

Testifying in person against the bill were Abortion Action Missouri; Amy Kuo Hammerman, National Council Of Jewish Women St. Louis; Calvino Hammerman; Katy Erker-Lynch, Promo; Kelvin Simmons, Health Forward Foundation of Kansas City; Rebecca Nowlin, Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging; Mo Naacp; Zaria Chaney; American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; and American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri.

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.