

HB 875 -- STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

SPONSOR: Chappell

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 10 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 7 to 3.

This bill defines "adverse action", "belief-based student association", and "benefit" and prohibits public institutions of higher learning from taking any action or enforcing any policy that denies a belief-based student association benefits available to other student associations.

The bill prohibits discrimination against a belief-based student association based on its requirement that leaders of the association adhere to its sincerely held beliefs, practice requirements, or standards of conduct.

The bill authorizes aggrieved belief-based student associations to seek appropriate relief in a judicial or administrative proceeding involving a public institution of higher learning that violates the requirements of the bill.

This bill is the same as SB 160 (2025) and HB 1518 (2024).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill codifies what is already a constitutional right enjoyed by Missouri citizens, in that the provisions of this bill curbs efforts made by public colleges and universities from infringing upon a student's religious speech. Supporters further say that this bill does not prevent students from becoming a member of any group or club, but rather focuses on those seeking a leadership position.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Chappell; Missouri Catholic Conference; 1st Amendment Partnership; Paul Logan Spena, Alliance Defending Freedom; Jonathan R. Whitehead; Timothy T. Faber; Americans For Prosperity.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill will result in the funding of organizations that primarily advocate hatred. This in turn will require that a public university endorse certain kinds of speech, which is unconstitutional. Opponents further say that this is tantamount to state-sponsored discrimination, which would lead to more violence.

Testifying in person against the bill were Missouri NEA; Arch Kimbriel; American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri; Nimrod Chapel Jr., MO NAACP; Promo Missouri; Zaria Chaney.

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.