

HB 1200 -- THE AGE OF MARRIAGE

SPONSOR: Reuter

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 15 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative by a vote of 8 to 1.

Currently, a marriage license can not be issued in Missouri for individuals under 16 years of age or issued when one party to the marriage is under 18 years of age and the other party is over 21 years of age. Additionally, no marriage license can be issued if any party to the marriage is under 18 years of age without parental consent.

This bill repeals those provisions so no marriage license can be issued in Missouri for individuals under 18 years of age.

This bill is similar to HB 484 (2025), HB 2709, and SCS SB 767 (2024).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that currently one parent can enter a 16 or 17 year old into marriage, but there is no input required from the minor, nor is there recourse for a minor who does not want to. Missouri previously allowed a child of any age to be entered into marriage. Before the 2018 bill passed, 88% of minors who married were age 16 or 17. 282 minors were married between 2019 and 2022, the rate barely dropping because the 2018 law did not address the vast majority of persons impacted by child marriage. The trafficking piece is important. Minors are being trafficked under the guise of marriage, with mostly girls being married to adult men. Additionally, shelters are not confidential or require parental consent.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Reuter; Unchained At Last; Brandi Dredge; Holly Thompson Rehder; Sheena Eastburn; Michele Hanash, AHA Foundation; Sheena Eastburn, Unchained At Last; Matthew Huffman, Missouri Coalition Against Domestic And Sexual Violence; Arnie C.Dienoff; Network Against Child Abuse; and Missouri Network Against Child Abuse.

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.