



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 273</b>		DATE: <b>2/26/2025</b>	
COMMITTEE: <b>Crime and Public Safety</b>			
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>DEBRA COFFEY</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>817-307-4992</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>SAFETY &amp; ADVOCACY FOR EMPOWERMENT</b>		TITLE: <b>CHIEF GOVT. AFFAIRS</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>865 CR 101</b>			
CITY: <b>LAMPASAS</b>		STATE: <b>TX</b>	ZIP: <b>76550</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/26/2025 12:00 AM</b>	
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>			



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>GWEN SMITH</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>EMPOWER MISSOURI</b>		TITLE: <b>CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY MANAGER</b>	
ADDRESS:			
CITY: <b>ST. LOUIS</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>63116</b>
EMAIL: <b>gwen@empowermissouri.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/26/2025 9:37 PM</b>
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As the largest and oldest anti-poverty non-profit in our state, Empower Missouri is committed to improving the quality of life for all Missouri residents through advocacy. Since our inception, Empower Missouri has focused on the criminal justice system and its impacts. Our Community Justice Coalition consists of community advocates and organizations from across the state who work with those who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. Many coalition members are formerly incarcerated or have currently incarcerated loved ones, and all are connected by a vision for a future without mass incarceration.

We are providing testimony today in support of HB 273. This bill would create a DWI diversion program, giving prosecutors the authority to divert criminal DWI cases to a diversion program if the defendant meets certain criteria, including having no previous intoxicated-related traffic offenses. Defendants would also be able to request to be diverted to the program. Program requirements include the installation of a breathalyzer in the participant's vehicle for a minimum of one year. Diversion programs are an effective method of reducing the number of individuals sent to jail or prison while also providing community-based programming to participants that supports their recovery process or otherwise improves their quality of life. A criminal record carries with it numerous collateral consequences that can make it difficult for an individual to obtain employment, access educational opportunities, and secure safe and stable housing. This bill offer an alternative path for certain individuals who are committed to changing their behavior. Cases are only dismissed following the successful completion of the diversion program, ensuring that individuals are still held accountable for their actions. Diversion programs can significantly decrease recidivism rates, reducing the likelihood that participants will reoffend. A recent study\* of Texas diversion programs found that defendants without a prior felony conviction who participated had an immediate and dramatic reduction in subsequent offending: the total number of future convictions fell by 75 percent over a 10-year follow-up period, compared to similar defendants who did not receive diversion. This will lead to improved public safety in Missouri communities. In addition to these benefits, diversion programs can also save states money. Research shows\*\* that for every dollar invested in drug treatment, \$12 is saved through the reduction of future crime and health care expenses. In 2019, arrest data shows that over 14,000 individuals were arrested for suspicion of drunk driving in Missouri. By addressing the root causes of this crime through community-based treatment, our state can save money while reducing the strain on the criminal legal system. We hope that this bill will be a catalyst for further development of diversion programs for other types of offenses. Empower Missouri urges this committee to take action to pass HB 273 into law. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter. \*Michael Mueller-Smith, Kevin T. Schnepel, Diversion in the Criminal Justice System, The Review of Economic Studies, Volume 88, Issue 2, March 2021, Pages 883–936,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdaa030>\*\*Miller, T. and Hendrie, D. Substance Abuse Prevention Dollars and Cents: A Cost-Benefit Analysis, DHHS Pub. No. (SMA) 07-4298. Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2008.  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/cost-benefits-prevention.pdf>



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>JEROD BREIT</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-803-1501</b>	
REPRESENTING: <b>MADD MOTHERS AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING</b>		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: <b>2316 NE 72ND ST.</b>			
CITY: <b>GLADSTONE</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>64118</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/26/2025 12:00 AM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>MICHAEL R. GIBBONS</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-650-5783</b>	
REPRESENTING: <b>SAFE</b>		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: <b>115 EAST HIGH STREET</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/26/2025 12:00 AM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>ARNIE C. "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCAT</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: <b>arniedienoff@yahoo.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>2/26/2025 11:58 PM</b>

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**I am Opposed to this diversion.**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>BRIAN BERNSKOETTER</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-636-2822</b>	
REPRESENTING: <b>MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEYS</b>		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: <b>101 E. HIGH</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
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