



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

| | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------------------|---|
| BILL NUMBER: HB 317 | | DATE: 2/26/2025 | |
| COMMITTEE: Corrections and Public Institutions | | | |
| TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES | | | |
| WITNESS NAME | | | |
| INDIVIDUAL: | | | |
| WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF | | PHONE NUMBER: | |
| BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: | | TITLE: | |
| ADDRESS: | | | |
| CITY: | | STATE: | ZIP: |
| EMAIL: | ATTENDANCE: | | SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM |
| THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo. | | | |



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| WITNESS NAME | | | |
| BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION: | | | |
| WITNESS NAME: GWEN SMITH | | PHONE NUMBER: | |
| BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMPOWER MISSOURI | | TITLE: CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY MANAGER | |
| ADDRESS: | | | |
| CITY: ST. LOUIS | | STATE: MO | ZIP: 63116 |
| EMAIL: gwen@empowermissouri.org | ATTENDANCE: In-Person | | SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 9:27 PM |
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Founded in 1901, Empower Missouri advocates for the well-being of Missourians through civic leadership, education, and research. As part of our work, we organize a statewide Community Justice Coalition with the goal of decreasing recidivism, decreasing the prison population, and decreasing Missouri's criminal justice costs all while ensuring our communities are safe. It is imperative that incarcerated individuals are able to stay in communication with their loved ones while they are serving their sentences. Many individuals who are incarcerated have pre-existing mental health conditions, and even those who don't can suffer great consequences to their mental health brought on by isolation. Maintaining a connection with family fosters a sense of hope, encourages good behavior, and helps maintain important parental and other familial bonds. Incarcerated individuals who maintain strong family ties have an easier time transitioning home and are more likely to succeed during re-entry, benefiting themselves, their families, and their community. HB 317, sponsored by Rep. Michael Davis, would cap the cost of domestic phone calls in prisons and jails at 12 cents per minute. Based on this rate, the cost of a 15-minute phone call would be capped at \$1.80. On average, a 15-minute phone call in a correctional facility costs \$5.74, while some prisons are charging \$1 or more per minute. One study found that more than a third of families with incarcerated relatives went into debt over the costs of staying in touch with their loved ones. Many of these families are already suffering financially from missing a wage earner from the household— they should not go further into debt in order to fulfill a basic human need for connection. Meanwhile, the high costs of phone calls in jails and prisons generate \$1.4B per year for the correctional telecommunications sector. HB 317 provides an important profit cap for these businesses while protecting access to an essential service for incarcerated individuals and their families. We urge this committee to vote yes on this bill.



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| WITNESS NAME | | | |
| BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION: | | | |
| WITNESS NAME: LIZA WEISS | | PHONE NUMBER: 202-641-0041 | |
| BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI APPLE SEED | | TITLE: | |
| ADDRESS: 100 N TUCKER BLVD | | | |
| CITY: ST LOUIS | | STATE: MO | ZIP: 63130 |
| EMAIL: | ATTENDANCE: | SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM | |
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