



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 492		DATE: 3/12/2025	
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			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: JAMES HARRIS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-761-7875	
REPRESENTING: LJ HART & COMPANY		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 122 EAST HIGH STREET, SUITE 200			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 3/12/2025 12:00 AM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: TRENT WATSON		PHONE NUMBER: 314-606-0141	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 2221			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL: Trent@trentwatson.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 3/12/2025 7:59 AM
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In support of the regional jail bill.			



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C."HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 3/12/2025 11:59 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: mdreyer93@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/12/2025 11:11 PM
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I stand in firm opposition to HB 492, a bill that threatens to exacerbate systemic inequities, undermine fiscal accountability, and prioritize incarceration over the well-being of our communities. While framed as a measure to streamline regional jail operations, this legislation risks imposing regressive financial burdens on vulnerable populations, eroding democratic safeguards, and perpetuating a cycle of mass incarceration. Below, I outline the grave concerns that demand this bill's rejection.

- A Regressive Tax Increase That Punishes the Poor** HB 492 raises the maximum regional jail sales tax to 1%, a move that will disproportionately harm low-income families. Sales taxes are inherently regressive, consuming a larger share of income from those least able to afford it. Forcing struggling communities to shoulder the cost of expanding carceral infrastructure—rather than investing in education, mental health services, or job creation—is not just fiscally irresponsible; it is morally indefensible. This tax will deepen economic inequality while funneling public funds into a system that criminalizes poverty.
- Undermining Democratic Accountability** Though the bill requires voter approval for counties to join a jail district, it simultaneously strips away critical safeguards. By repealing the 12-month interval between votes, HB 492 opens the door to rushed, poorly informed decisions that deny voters time to scrutinize the long-term consequences. Furthermore, the removal of the sunset clause (currently set for 2028) eliminates a vital mechanism for evaluating the district's effectiveness and need. Permanent taxes demand permanent scrutiny—this bill abandons that principle.
- Blank Check for Spending Without Transparency** Expanding permissible uses of tax revenue to include “any authorized purpose” invites misuse and lack of oversight. Without strict guardrails, funds intended for public safety could be diverted to speculative projects unrelated to community well-being. This ambiguity risks subsidizing costly, profit-driven ventures—including contracts with private prisons—rather than proven strategies to reduce recidivism or address root causes of crime.
- Privatizing Incarceration: Profits Over People** HB 492 explicitly authorizes regional jails to contract with private entities to house prisoners. Privatized incarceration has a documented history of prioritizing shareholder profits over human dignity, leading to overcrowding, neglect, and egregious human rights violations. To endorse this model is to condone a system where financial gain is extracted from the suffering of incarcerated individuals and their families.
- Emergency Clause: Silencing the Public** The inclusion of an emergency clause—bypassing the standard 90-day waiting period—is an affront to democratic deliberation. It denies communities the opportunity to challenge or amend this deeply flawed legislation through petitions or referendums. Rushing this bill into law signals a disregard for public input and transparency.

Conclusion: Invest in Communities, Not Cages HB 492 represents a dangerous pivot toward expanding incarceration infrastructure under the guise of regional cooperation. True public safety is not achieved by levying taxes on the poor to fund jails—it is built by addressing poverty, substance use, and lack of opportunity through compassionate, evidence-based solutions. I urge you to reject HB 492 and instead champion policies that reduce reliance on incarceration, promote fiscal

responsibility, and foster thriving, equitable communities. The people of our state deserve investments in their futures, not in their imprisonment.



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INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: kortniehuddleston@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/12/2025 11:13 PM
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I strongly oppose HB 492, a bill that prioritizes expanding incarceration over addressing the root causes of crime and supporting our communities. While it claims to improve regional jail operations, this legislation risks placing unfair financial burdens on taxpayers, weakening public oversight, and perpetuating a system that harms rather than helps. Below, I outline the key reasons why this bill should be rejected.

1. A Harmful Tax Increase on Working Families HB 492 raises the maximum regional jail sales tax to 1%, a move that will hit low-income families the hardest. Sales taxes are regressive, meaning they take a larger percentage of income from those who can least afford it. Instead of funding solutions like mental health services, addiction treatment, or job programs, this bill forces struggling communities to pay for expanding jails. This approach punishes the poor and deepens inequality, all while failing to address the real issues that lead to crime.

2. Cutting Corners on Public Accountability While the bill requires voter approval for counties to join a jail district, it removes important safeguards. By eliminating the 12-month waiting period between votes, HB 492 allows rushed decisions without giving voters time to fully understand the long-term impacts. Additionally, repealing the sunset clause (currently set for 2028) means there will be no automatic review of whether these districts are effective or even necessary. Permanent taxes should come with permanent accountability—this bill removes that critical check.

3. Vague Spending Rules Invite Waste and Abuse The bill expands how tax revenue can be used, allowing funds to be spent on “any authorized purpose.” This vague language opens the door to misuse and lack of oversight. Without clear limits, money meant for public safety could be diverted to questionable projects or private profits, rather than programs that actually reduce crime and support rehabilitation. Taxpayer dollars should be spent wisely and transparently—this bill fails to ensure that.

4. Privatizing Prisons: Putting Profits First HB 492 explicitly allows regional jails to contract with private companies to house prisoners. Privatized prisons have a long history of prioritizing profits over people, leading to overcrowding, poor conditions, and human rights abuses. Supporting this model means endorsing a system where corporations profit from incarceration, rather than focusing on rehabilitation and community well-being.

5. Emergency Clause: Silencing the Public The inclusion of an emergency clause bypasses the standard 90-day waiting period, preventing the public from challenging or questioning this bill. This rushed approach undermines transparency and denies communities a voice in a decision that will directly impact their lives and finances.

Conclusion: Build Communities, Not Jails HB 492 is a step in the wrong direction. True public safety comes from addressing the root causes of crime—poverty, lack of opportunity, and untreated mental health and addiction issues—not from locking more people up. This bill places an unfair burden on taxpayers, weakens accountability, and prioritizes incarceration over meaningful solutions. I urge you to reject HB 492 and focus instead on policies that invest in people, not prisons. Our communities deserve better than a system that profits from their struggles.