



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 616		DATE: 3/26/2025	
COMMITTEE: Higher Education and Workforce Development			
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: 3/26/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CHRISTIAN DANG		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: cldangfhh@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/26/2025 4:28 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: DANIEL GRIFFIN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: dgriffin8456@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/26/2025 3:37 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: DR. RICHARD WILLIAMS		PHONE NUMBER: 417-836-5000	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY		TITLE: PRESIDENT	
ADDRESS: 901 S. NATIONAL AVE.			
CITY: SPRINGFIELD		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65897
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 3/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: GARRETT GRIFFIN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: garrettsakoulasgriffin@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/26/2025 3:48 PM
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I am a current master's student in American history at Missouri State University. If I ever decide to get my PhD, I would want to get it at Missouri State. But that is against the law! It is baffling to me that nine public universities are banned from offering PhDs and other doctorates. I support HB 90 and HB 616 because I believe in free choice. I believe in treating all public universities in this state equally. I oppose monopoly and holding some schools back to give the UM system a leg up. The Senate Education committee just passed the Senate version of these bills with a bipartisan vote of 5-2. In 2024, the bill passed 8-2. This is such common sense that most everyone can agree on it. Only those enjoying a monopoly and special privileges would oppose this, by putting forth fictions about spiraling costs. (As the Fiscal Note on these bills indicates, these concerns are unfounded. Which makes sense considering that the Coordinating Board still exists to manage programs and costs; it is simply right to allow the nine disadvantaged schools to propose programs to the Board like the UM System can.) I urge you to vote YES to stand up for competition, fairness, and keeping more potential doctoral students in the state.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JOHN M. HUTCHINSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MATTHEW K O'HARA		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: mizzst04@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/26/2025 3:48 PM
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Support the whole state. Competition is never a bad thing. SW Missouri needs a school that offers all degrees regardless of what Mizzou has to offer. If my kids choose to go to med school or law school, it will be out of state unless you pass this bill.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: PETER HERSCEND		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TOM STRONG		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: TORI MERCADO		PHONE NUMBER: 417-862-5567	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SPRINGFIELD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE		TITLE: PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER	
ADDRESS: 202 S JOHN Q HAMMONS PARKWAY			
CITY: SPRINGFIELD		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65806
EMAIL: tmercado@springfieldchamber.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/25/2025 12:08 PM
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Dear Chairman Brown and members of the House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development: On behalf of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce and our over 1,500-member businesses, please accept this letter of support for House Bill 616, sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett. This important legislation would remove long-standing constraints on Missouri's public higher education institutions, allowing them greater flexibility in offering degree programs that align with workforce needs and regional economic development. Higher education institutions are key economic drivers for Missouri and the Springfield region. Missouri State University (MSU) plays a critical role in preparing a skilled workforce and ensuring our employers have access to the talent they need. However, current restrictions limit MSU's ability to offer degrees in critical fields, especially in high-demand industries such as engineering, health care, and advanced technology. By repealing outdated provisions that grant exclusive degree-conferring authority to the University of Missouri, House Bill 616 will expand access to high-quality, in-demand degree programs in fields essential to Missouri's workforce; strengthen regional economic growth by allowing institutions like MSU to better serve industry needs; and increase opportunities for Missouri students by ensuring they have more educational options closer to home. The Springfield business community strongly supports efforts to align higher education with workforce development needs. House Bill 616 is a necessary step in modernizing Missouri's higher education system to meet today's economic realities. We strongly encourage your support of House Bill 616 to help ensure that Missouri remains competitive in attracting and retaining businesses and talent. Sincerely, Matt Morrow President and CEO Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce 202 S John Q Hammons Parkway Springfield, MO 65806



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CHARLES (CHUCK) BRAZEALE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CHRISTOPHER WALLACE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: cbwallace2013@icloud.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/25/2025 2:19 PM
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My name is Christopher Wallace, and I presently reside in Maryville, Missouri. I am providing written testimony in opposition to HB 90 and HB 616. By way of further introduction, I hold a MS and PhD in Nuclear Engineering from the University of Missouri – Columbia. The program I graduated from was world class. The year I graduated (1985) it was rated the #7 nuclear engineering graduate program in the United States and two years later it had moved up the rankings to #5. It stayed at that level for several years. It took the MU System the better part of 20 years to achieve that peer recognized level of consistent performance (~ 1968 – 1985). Nationally competitive research PhD programs are not created overnight. Let me reinforce this with a couple of items: 1. MU funded research for 2024 totaled ~ \$651M; Missouri State ~ \$12M. 2. In 2005, Southwest Missouri State University (SMS) made a request to change their name to Missouri State University. As part of the agreement with the Missouri legislature and the UM System, SMS agreed to the following conditions: Missouri State University would not seek to become a Research University; Missouri State University would not offer doctoral and professional degrees. 3. In response to MSU's efforts to offer doctoral programs in violation of the 2005 agreement, HB 1465 was passed by the Missouri Legislature in 2018 and signed into law. This law allows 4-year universities to offer doctoral and professional degrees in partnership with the UM System. My understanding is if the UM System declines to partner on a specific program, 4-year universities can move forward with a specific doctoral and/or professional degree program. 4. Subsequently, the UM System has 8-degree programs in partnership with 4-year institutions. Five of the eight are with Missouri State University. 5. Per capita higher education funding in 2025 for Missouri is \$213.00. We only rank ahead of New Hampshire, Washington DC, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. Our nearest SEC peer is Oklahoma at \$284.00. The essence of a good graduate research PhD program is the ability to effectively win competitions for research funding against the Cal Tech's, UCLA's, MIT's, and Michigan's of the world – and then turn that research into technology that benefits your citizens and creates economic opportunity for your state. At the time I went through our MU program, the acceptance rate for MS applicants was ~ 20%, while the Ph.D. program rejected ~ 95% of those who attempted it. If you made it through both wickets and successfully graduated, you should be able to effectively compete and win against anybody. After graduation I had no trouble competing. I spent more than 25 years in the defense and intelligence business. That included time in the private sector as well as time as a Special Government Employee with Senior Executive Service rank, serving across administrations of both political parties. Prior to retirement I was asked, and privileged, to serve on the: Army Science Board (works for the VCSUSA and AUSA RDT&E), the Naval Research Advisory Committee (works for ASN RDT&E), the DARPA Senior Review Board (works for Sec Def and JCS), the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Threat Reduction Advisory Council Science and Technology Panel (works for DTRA Director and JCS), and Sandia National Laboratory's National Security Advisory Panel. I also served as the first Chief Scientist

of the US Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group. I was able to observe research engineering graduate programs from multiple perspectives: as a source of employees and potential business partners from the private sector side; and, as a potential source of good research ideas that should be funded, and supported, from the government side. I also had a chance to do a little public and private university advisory work. So, what are some of the lessons learned that I think about when considering this prospective legislation: 1.) The AAU Public Land Grant Universities produced better graduates, better technologies, and better partner program performance than many famous private universities. The Land Grant Extension mission imbued culture sharpened their focus on moving quickly from research result to citizen benefit. So, for example, when I brought Department of Energy National Laboratory colleagues with me to see what research could be rapidly transitioned to the warfighter, the AAU Land Grants were all over that goal – the private universities not so much. 2.) Federal funding agencies could be likely to interpret these proposed bills (if passed) as breaking Missouri's commitment to the land grant mission and we might be violating Federal law (Morrill Act and Smith-Lever Act) by spreading the public graduate research PhD programs to the regional universities. This could place USDA and NIFA support at risk. The AAU would also likely view this in an unsympathetic light – could place MU's AAU status at risk and place Federal support for NEXT GEN and MURR 2 at risk. 3.) You as legislators, will need to spend far more money, and it will take more time, than you envision right now to get the regional universities to the point where the Federal Government or private entities will consider them to be competitive research institutions on par with what already exists within the MU System. The current disparity in research awards between MU and MSU tells you that more qualified research faculty will need to be hired at the regional universities – if the existing regional university faculty could be as competitive as MU, they would have already done it by making use of the HB 1465 provisions already existing within Missouri law. They have not done so. Also, the Federal government and appropriate accrediting agencies will likely view many of the existing faculty and school directors as not credible when it comes to research PhD student preparation and supervision (no good existing research track record). Regional university school directors with terminal MS degrees will need to be replaced if those schools are to now offer research PhD degrees. Hiring the faculty to do this will require salary schedule increases along with regional university budget increases to hire individuals with acceptable demonstrated capabilities. Consequently, the regional universities will be competing with the AAU Public Land Grants and AAU private universities in our area for faculty talent. Once hired, those new faculty will not be creating newly minted PhD graduates overnight – it will take 4 to 6 years before the first cohort graduates and on the order of 10 – 20 years for the programs to climb into the top ten. We just don't have the tax base and the time to successfully pull off the transition of regional universities to full on public research universities. This is a bad idea for the state of Missouri.



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BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: RYAN RAPP		PHONE NUMBER: 573-882-3611	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI		TITLE: CFO	
ADDRESS: 311 JESSE HALL			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 35203
EMAIL: rapp@missouri.edu	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 3/26/2025 6:48 PM	
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