



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 731		DATE: 2/26/2025	
COMMITTEE: Judiciary			
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."HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 11:57 PM

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I am in Support of this Bill. I am in favor of providing this right and Judicial Tool.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: BARBARA MURPHY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: barbara5285@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2025 7:37 AM

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Why should circumstantial evidence convict an innocent person?



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: BRIAN BERNSKOETTER		PHONE NUMBER: 573-636-2822	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEYS		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 100 E. HIGH			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CHRISTOPHER DUNN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: cdunn5508@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2025 2:26 PM
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My name is Christopher Dunn. After I was wrongfully convicted in 1991 for a crime I didn't commit, I trusted the court system to do the right thing by the definition of the law, but I was wrong. I filed appeal after appeal, only to be denied time after time. Motion for new trial – denied; 29.15 Post Conviction Relief motion – denied; Direct Appeal motion - denied, recall mandates - denied; 2254 Federal Habeas Corpus – denied. Hope became a fictitious presumption for me - a judicial unicorn that didn't exist in the world of truth. After I brought clear and convincing evidence of my innocence to a Missouri Circuit Court in 2018, Judge William Hickie ruled in 2020 that I met the standard for a freestanding claim of actual innocence. However, the judge believed that the Lincoln v. Cassady precedent prevented him from freeing me because only death row inmates could be freed after proving a freestanding claim of actual innocence. When SB 53 passed and became Mo. 547.031, it gave hope a lifeline and provided the wrongly convicted like me with a chance to believe again in a system that failed us from the start. I am grateful beyond words that Circuit Attorney Gabriel Gore and retired Judge Booker T. Shaw confirmed my innocence as a result of their investigations and successfully fought to free me. However, the extensive time and incredible effort on their and their teams' part would not have been necessary if Judge Hickie had the authority to free me when he deemed me innocent. I sat in Potosi with Joseph Amrine and others who fought for their lives. How could the Attorney General say that freestanding actual innocence should apply only to those on death row? This technically undermines the validity of the Constitution of the United States and the Missouri State Constitution. If HB 731 is denied the right to exist, then what's the point of the Declaration of Independence and concept of liberty for all? A judge's ruling has the power to deprive a citizen of their freedom. A judge's ruling should be enough to restore freedom as well.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: DEB WATSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: debwatson59@icloud.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2025 3:55 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: DENA NOTZ		PHONE NUMBER: 920-901-6887	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: COLLECTIVELY CHANGING CORRECTIONS		TITLE: PRESIDENT	
ADDRESS: 11260 BELL RD.			
CITY: SUCCESS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65570
EMAIL: cccforchange24@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/20/2025 4:44 PM	

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Those of us at Collectively Changing Corrections wholeheartedly support this bill. An innocent person should have every opportunity to prove their innocence, and have their cases reviewed if errors were made that resulted in them being convicted of a crime they did not commit. Hoops should not have to be jumped through when a person says they are innocent and year after year they are sitting in prison rotting away, while the guilty person is free to re-offend. Every effort should be made to free innocent people and find the one actually guilty of the crime. The number of men and woman sitting in prison in Missouri, just because there was pressure to close cases, is staggering. We need to start believing these innocent people and help them get back to their families and living their lives. Thank you for your time, Collectively Changing Corrections



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: DONNA EWING		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: ewingd71@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2025 9:40 AM

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My husband is factually innocent. The testimony that proves he wasn't at the crime scene. The police hid evidence to prove it was not him.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ELIZABETH ANN PETERSON		PHONE NUMBER: 314-420-2129	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: SLU CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY POD		TITLE: SLU CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY POD LEADER	
ADDRESS: 1930 LYMINGTON COMMON			
CITY: CHESTERFIELD		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63005
EMAIL: elizabeth.peterson.1@slu.edu	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 11:10 AM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I, Elizabeth Peterson, am writing on behalf of the Criminal Justice Policy Pod at Saint Louis University to express our strong support for HB 731. This bill is a crucial step in ensuring fairness in our criminal justice system by allowing incarcerated individuals to raise claims of actual innocence in post-conviction proceedings. Currently, many people who are wrongfully convicted have little recourse to challenge their conviction after their trial. HB 731 would change that by allowing new evidence—such as DNA results or witness statements—to be considered by the court, even if it wasn't available at the time of trial. This means that innocent people who are in prison have a chance to prove their innocence and get the justice they deserve. We believe this bill is important for several reasons: It corrects wrongful convictions. If new evidence proves someone is innocent, they should have a chance to have their case reviewed. It gives people a fair shot at justice. Everyone deserves a chance to prove their innocence, especially when new information comes to light. It builds trust in the system. When the system corrects mistakes, it shows that justice matters and that innocent people won't stay in prison. We believe HB 731 will make our justice system more fair and reliable. Vote yes on HB 731.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ERICA WILLIAMS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: e.j.williams19861205@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2025 11:57 AM
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I believe that every individual should be able to prove their innocence. And to be able to fully see and hear their cases. To be able to depend on their selves and their loved ones to help them prove that they're innocent.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: GEORGIA EMPIE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: wesjr1991@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2025 3:07 PM
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Yes



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: GLADYS COLLIS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: gladys.collis23@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2025 5:01 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JEANETTE MOTT OXFORD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: jmo.mott.oxford@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2025 9:52 PM
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Chair Parker and Members of House Judiciary, I ask that you support both HB 1075 and HB 731. Sadly, sometimes our justice system does get it wrong, and I know a gentleman incarcerated at Southeast Correctional Center who currently has no ability to press forward with evidence of his innocence. Opening up this possibility provides a much needed additional route to reverse injustices and release those who are innocent.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JOSHUA KEZER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JUDISSA		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: judissafonseca@gmail.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2025 2:23 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KELSEY WATKINS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: watkinskelsey23@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2025 3:03 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

My husband is currently fighting his innocence which has been an uphill battle full of wrongful decisions by Missouri courts. 11 years later and thousands of dollars we are still fighting to prove his innocence. Multiple stories have been published in regards to Kurtis Watkins and the wrongdoings of his case and during each appeal stage



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KENYA BRUMFIELD-YOUNG		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KEVIN STRICKLAND		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KHANIKA HARPER		PHONE NUMBER: 314-530-8331	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: JUSTICE FOR ALL		TITLE: FOUNDER	
ADDRESS:			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63147
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MADELINE-MICHELLE: CARTHEN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: resilience2redemption@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2025 4:19 PM
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As a Volunteer Chaplain with 31 years of service in MODOC, I support HB 731 – Collins – Actual Innocence. Justice demands that no innocent person remains behind bars due to legal technicalities or outdated policies. This bill is a necessary step toward ensuring that individuals with clear and credible evidence of their innocence have the opportunity to seek justice. A system that values fairness must prioritize truth over conviction rates. Every wrongful imprisonment is a failure of justice—this bill is a step toward correcting those failures.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: MARCEL HAGENS		PHONE NUMBER: 314-299-8753	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: ACTION ST LOUIS POWER PROJECT		TITLE: POLICY COORDINATOR	
ADDRESS: 4138 N. GRAND			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	

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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MAYCE MARSH		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: maycemarsh@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2025 2:11 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ML SMITH		PHONE NUMBER: 314-814-2910	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI JUSTICE COALITION		TITLE: DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 300563			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63130
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: PRECIOUS JONES		PHONE NUMBER: 417-943-0757	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: BREAKING GENERATIONAL POVERTY FOUNDATION INC		TITLE: FOUNDER	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 470306			
CITY: ST LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63147
EMAIL: letsbgp@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:07 PM

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I am writing to express my strong support for this bill, which allows individuals in the custody of the Missouri Department of Corrections to raise a freestanding claim of actual innocence in any post-conviction proceeding. This legislation is crucial, particularly in a state like Missouri, which still maintains a death penalty system. We must acknowledge the very real possibility that innocent people have been sentenced to death, and in some cases, executed, only to later have their innocence proven after it is too late. Missouri has tragically executed innocent individuals in the past, and this should never be an acceptable outcome for our justice system. The fact that we have taken lives based on wrongful convictions is a profound injustice to not only those individuals, but to their families and communities as well. This bill provides an opportunity for those who are wrongfully imprisoned to prove their innocence, offering a vital safeguard to prevent the irreparable harm of executing innocent people. Furthermore, the housing of innocent individuals on death row or in prison is an additional burden on our state's taxpayers. Incarcerating someone who is innocent wastes valuable resources and exacerbates the financial strain on our prison system. It also causes immeasurable harm to the families of the wrongfully convicted, who suffer the emotional and financial toll of having a loved one imprisoned or on death row for a crime they did not commit. The ripple effect of these wrongful convictions often leads to broken families, fractured communities, and generations of harm. The passage of this bill would ensure that the courts have the necessary tools to review and correct these errors, with the authority to vacate or set aside judgments if clear and convincing evidence of innocence is presented. This is a critical step in making sure that our justice system is fair, transparent, and holds itself accountable for its mistakes. In conclusion, this bill is important for Missouri and for the broader community because it prevents the irreparable harm of executing or incarcerating innocent people. It ensures justice for those who have been wrongfully convicted and provides a path for fairness, healing, and restitution for families affected by wrongful convictions. This bill represents a necessary and responsible step forward for our state, one that reflects our shared values of justice and compassion.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: RICHARD A PORTERFIELD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: richardporterfield@hotmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/24/2025 3:42 PM
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If we deny the submission of credible, relevant evidence after a conviction that offers the very real possibility of a not guilty determination, we will have willfully denied justice. Loopholes in a citizen's ability to defend themselves must not be encumbered with language that presents obstructions to justice being allowed to hear all evidence. I respectfully request that this HB 731 be approved.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: RICHARD H. JACKSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: audimanasseh@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 9:21 AM
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In view of the recent blatant refusal by former Governor Parson to view the evidence and continue with the execution of Marcella Williams, despite the pondering of the evidence dictating clearly, without doubt of contradiction, his innocence, the murder proceeded. Andrew Bailey, the hand pick servant for Parson, went on a vengeful torrid, to make sure Mr. Williams would be killed! Even when an agreement was reached to vacant the sentence Bailey fought hard to make sure Mr. Williams would be killed. Bailey was not listen to the arguments of Toulmin Model, Reductio ad Absurdum, and certainly not the Bayesian Probability. There are more, but Mr. Williams had exhausted all his remedies for release and without intervention from legislators, he was killed. As a returning citizen, I have seen innocence people, not die but not received the legal representation due them. You have the power, right in your hands to pass the bill, allowing total and maximum investigation into these innocence appeals. I ask you, to think about this, what if were your family member, or a close neighbor was convicted of murder, rape, how far would you extended you hands, in making sure every opportunity to prove their innocence was employed, overtime? Finally, making mistakes are apart of life but murdering innocence beings, when the evidence speaks loudly, otherwise, should not continue to be activity of this country. Today, you can change that weather from stormy and cloudy to sunshine and bright, for many incarcerated persons and the families awaiting their return. Thank you ever so much for your time.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: RIKA WHITE		PHONE NUMBER: 314-357-3236	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMPOWER MISSOURI		TITLE: POLICY MANAGER	
ADDRESS: 5269 EDMERE DR			
CITY: ST LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63033
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 731		DATE: 2/26/2025	
COMMITTEE: Judiciary			
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: RODNEY LINCOLN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM
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COMMITTEE: Judiciary			
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: SUSAN GIBSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: Onesuegibson@protonmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2025 6:21 AM
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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: SUSAN GILLHAM		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: sgillham@me.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/24/2025 9:35 PM
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Wrongful convictions are not just statistics or legal hypotheticals, they are real tragedies with devastating consequences. In Missouri, we have seen innocent people lose decades of their lives because our system, as it stands, lacks a direct, consistent pathway for proving actual innocence in post-conviction proceedings. House Bill 731, which should be supported, aims to correct this injustice.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TAMELA YVONNE WASHINGTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TECONA DONALD-SULLIVAN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TIMOTHY FABER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: tfaber@mobaptist.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2025 8:59 PM
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Micah 6.8 says: What does the Lord require of you, O man, but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God. I believe we all want to do justice. But sometimes, in our drive for justice we forget to love kindness, and we neglect to walk humbly. We have a legal system in this country that provides a defense for alleged criminals when they cannot afford one themselves. That is certainly an example of seeking to do justice. And while there are certainly those who have committed crimes and have been found guilty, and do deserve the consequences of their actions . . . if we truly desire to do justice, along with loving kindness and walking humbly, we must acknowledge that as good as our justice system is, there are times when mistakes are made. Will we love our neighbor enough to give them an opportunity to prove their innocence when evidence points to that? Or will we be so prideful, so cold hearted, as to insist that our justice system never makes an error. We must remember that we are dealing with people who may – or may not – have made some really bad choices in life. But, are we willing to admit that our legal system is also made up of people, imperfect people who have also made some bad choices along the way. So if our justice system is made up of imperfect people, how can the system we have created be perfect? HB731 and HB1075 do not seek to exonerate the guilty. They are merely guaranteeing every person who has been previously convicted and is currently incarcerated the opportunity to provide and present evidence that will prove their innocence when their efforts are often now rejected. If such evidence does not prove their innocence they must still fulfill the terms of their sentence. But this legislation ensures that we are kind, that we walk humbly, and in that, that we love true justice, not simply justice that is expedient.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: TRICIA ROJO BUSHNELL		PHONE NUMBER: 816-221-2166	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MIDWEST INNOCENCE PROJECT		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 300 E. 39TH ST.			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64111
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: DARRELL L. MOORE		PHONE NUMBER: 573-751-0619	
REPRESENTING: MO ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS, MO OFFICE OF PROSECUTION SERVICES		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 899, 200 MADISON ST, SUITE 1060			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JAMES S. ATKINS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-751-7890	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: ATTORNEY GENERAL's OFFICE		TITLE: FIRST ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL	
ADDRESS: SUPREME COURT BLDG.			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65203
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/26/2025 12:00 AM	
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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KENYA BRUMFIELD-YOUNG		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: Kenya.BrumfieldYoung@slu.edu	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2025 5:09 PM
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Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee, My name is Professor Kenya Brumfield-Young, and I serve as an Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Saint Louis University. I submit this testimony in my personal capacity to provide information regarding House Bill 731 (HB 731), which seeks to establish provisions for freestanding claims of actual innocence in Missouri's judicial system. The views expressed herein do not represent Saint Louis University, its partners, board, or affiliates. Missouri's Position Relative to Other States As of recent analyses, at least eight states have recognized freestanding claims of actual innocence, either through legislation or judicial decisions. These states provide legal avenues for individuals to present new, credible evidence of innocence post-conviction. In contrast, Missouri lacks a clear mechanism for such claims, positioning it behind these states in addressing wrongful convictions. Constitutional Implications: Equal Protection Concerns The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees that no state shall "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Missouri's current legal framework, which lacks provisions for freestanding claims of actual innocence, may inadvertently violate this constitutional guarantee. By not providing a mechanism for individuals to present new evidence of innocence, Missouri denies certain individuals the opportunity to challenge their wrongful convictions, creating a disparity that undermines the principle of equal protection. The Urgent Need for HB 731 Implementing HB 731 would: Establish a Legal Avenue: Allow individuals to present new, credible evidence of actual innocence, ensuring that the wrongfully convicted have a pathway to justice. Align Missouri with National Standards: Bring the state in line with others that have recognized the necessity of such provisions to uphold justice and prevent the continued incarceration of innocent individuals. Enhance Public Trust: Demonstrate Missouri's commitment to a fair and equitable justice system, thereby strengthening public confidence in legal institutions. Conclusion The absence of a mechanism to address wrongful convictions not only perpetuates individual injustices but also erodes public trust in our legal system. By enacting HB 731, Missouri has the opportunity to rectify this critical shortcoming, uphold constitutional protections, and ensure that innocence is a sufficient basis for justice. Thank you for considering this testimony. Sincerely, Professor Kenya Brumfield-Young Assistant Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice Saint Louis University (Personal Capacity)