

HCS HBs 2273, 1946, 1814 & 2551 -- PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS

SPONSOR: Lewis

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Children and Families by a vote of 17 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 12 to 0.

Please see the summary sheet for a description of the House Committee Substitute.

This bill is similar to CCS HCS SS SCS SB 60 (2025).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the most vulnerable among us are targeted, treated as property, and discarded when no longer useful. The term "child pornography" implies a form of consent, which does not exist. Cases of child trafficking are difficult to prosecute locally, so having assistance from the Attorney General's office is helpful. Additionally, the World Cup is coming to the State, which will bring thousands of visitors, including traffickers from out of state, and women will face increased demand and exploitation.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Lewis; Recycling Grace Women's Center; Lucy Bloom; Audrey Kauffman, Central Missouri Stop Human Trafficking Coalition; Christine McDonald; Dan Engemann, Attorney General's Office; David Barnes, Missouri ENA Council; Missouri Network Against Child Abuse; and Kids Win Missouri.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that it is a duplication of services and laws, creating another committee and another task force that will not do anything. Additionally, it creates more mandates on local public safety officials and first responders, who are already being trained on the topic.

Testifying in person against the bill was Arnie C. Dienoff.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill provided statistics from around the State, with the largest demographic being persons aged

18-35. A lot of adult survivors have expressed that their trafficking began as a minor and continued through adulthood. Trainings do already occur, but they make a difference. The statewide council brings several corners of the State together, including higher-level state officials, and allows for follow-up and accountability.

Testifying in person on the bill was Jordan Campbell.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.