HCS SS SCS SB 1652 -- NEWLY CREATED OFFICE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

SPONSOR: Mosley

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Crime and Public Safety by a vote of 13 to 1 with 1 member voting Present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative by a vote of 11 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for SB 1652.

This bill creates the "Phoenix Alert System", a statewide program that is designed to help identify and locate abducted or missing African American women and girls who are reasonably believed to be a victim of a criminal offense. This bill tasks the Department of Public Safety with developing regions for the System and requires the Office of Missing and Murdered African American Women and Girls to coordinate with local law enforcement to notify local media in the region. Any local law enforcement agency that opts out of establishing a System will still be responsible for notifying the Office of reports within that agency's jurisdiction. This bill requires the System to include, at a minimum, the Department of Public Safety, the Office of Missing and Murdered African American Women and Girls, the Missouri Highway Patrol, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Health and Senior Services, and the Missouri Lottery Commission. Under this bill, any person who knowingly makes a false report that triggers a Phoenix Alert will be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

This bill requires the Director of the Department of Public Safety to establish within the Department an office dedicated to preventing and ending the targeting of African American women and girls. The bill establishes other duties of the Director as well as of the office. This bill requires the office to report on measurable outcomes as well as specific objectives and outcome measures proposed for the following year. The bill specifies what data and statistics must be included in the report. The report must be submitted by January 15th of each year to the chair and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over public safety.

The bill creates the "Missing and Murdered African American Women and Girls Fund" in the State Treasury, the funds of which will be

used solely by the Director of Public Safety for purposes authorized in the provisions of the bill, including issuing grants.

The office director will have access to corrections data and medical data maintained by an agency and classified as private data on individuals or confidential data on individuals to the extent the data is necessary for the office to perform its duties.

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

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill creates a permanent office within DPS to prevent and investigate the targeting of black women and children. This will apply to cold cases as well as new cases. This will add a phoenix alert so when someone meets the criteria law enforcement will send out an alert. This bill looks into the lack of data for solving cold cases and staff will be working on this as well. Supporters further state that they will need multiple full-time employees because they don't have the man power to enforce this currently. There are just under 200 missing African American women and children. They are grateful for what law enforcement has done but there needs to be more work. The cases of African American women and children don't get as much attention as the cases of Caucasian people and most people think the people in the city are missing because they ran away or because of drugs. There doesn't necessarily need to be an office for finding missing and murdered African American women and children forever but there should be one until the efforts are brought to parity.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Mosley; Dava-Leigh Brush, Missouri Equity Education Partnership; Theda Roxanne Wilson; and Jessica Henderson, Child Abduction Task Force.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

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.