



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 1696		DATE: 2/3/2026	
COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
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: SARAH MOORE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/3/2026 7:55 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: SYDNEY ARNOLD		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/3/2026 7:52 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/3/2026 1:11 AM
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I am Opposed to this Bill and its intension of taking away Rights-of-Parents and other parties who many have a claim to Adult-Child or Minor-Child Estate.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/1/2026 7:14 PM

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HB 1696 represents a sweeping statutory overreach into one of the most sensitive areas of personal autonomy: the disposition of human remains.

While styled as a clarification, the bill in fact restructures the common-law right of sepulcher, replaces judicial discretion with rigid statutory hierarchies, and invites conflict, litigation, and exploitation at the worst possible moment—immediately following death.

By codifying an expansive, prioritized list of “next-of-kin,” HB 1696 elevates procedural ranking over demonstrated intent, relational reality, or documented estrangement.

The bill gives dispositive authority to individuals based solely on legal proximity while offering only minimal safeguards against coercion, abuse, or opportunistic interference—particularly in blended families, high-conflict dissolutions, or cases involving minors, guardians, or pending investigations.

The forty-eight-hour waiver provision is especially troubling.

It creates a deemed forfeiture of rights under extreme emotional distress, compressed timelines, and uneven access to notice.

This construct is not consent; it is statutory ambush.

Fundamental rights related to bodily disposition should not be lost by silence during grief, travel, military deployment, or delayed notification.

HB 1696 further insulates funeral establishments from liability while shifting risk downstream to families, effectively deputizing private actors to make legal determinations they are neither trained nor authorized to adjudicate.

This bill prioritizes operational convenience over due process and invites inconsistent application across counties and cases.

Most critically, the bill intrudes into an area historically governed by common law and equitable judicial review, replacing fact-specific balancing with inflexible statutory commands.

Courts are better equipped than the legislature to resolve sepulcher disputes when intent is contested,

abuse is alleged, or equities conflict. Codifying this framework does not reduce litigation—it guarantees it.

Missouri does not need a blunt statutory instrument to manage grief, family conflict, and post-mortem autonomy.

HB 1696 substitutes rigidity for judgment, speed for fairness, and hierarchy for humanity.

It should be rejected.

Footnote:

See *Pettigrew v. Pettigrew*, 207 Pa. 313 (1904) (recognizing the common-law right of sepulcher as a quasi-property right grounded in relational interest and equity, not rigid statutory priority).

Courts have consistently held that sepulcher disputes require fact-specific analysis sensitive to intent, relationship, and circumstance—an approach undermined by inflexible legislative hierarchies and deemed waivers.