



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 1814		DATE: 1/13/2026	
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: ARNIE C. DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 11:07 PM	
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I am in support of this Bill and increasing the Penalties and Crimes of Sexual Misconduct and Commercial Sex-Trafficking. This Bill is a Must for Law Enforcement, Victims, Prosecutors and across our State.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: AUDREY KAUFFMAN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-338-0816	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: CENTRAL MO STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING COALITION		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 503 E NIFONG BLVD			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65201
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: BROOKLYNN ENGEMAN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/12/2026 7:19 PM
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As a teacher of young children and as a parent of a young child, protecting kids is both my profession and my responsibility. I see every day how vulnerable children can be, especially as technology becomes more present in their lives. These bills provide necessary protections to help keep children safe and to support families and educators in preventing exploitation. I strongly support the passage of these bills.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CALEB HATFIELD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CALEB ROYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CHRISTINA CAPONE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 10:58 AM	
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I submit this statement in strong support of Missouri HB 1814 and HB 2551.

My child was the victim of grooming by her father. Over time, concerning behaviors emerged that reflected manipulation, boundary violations, inappropriate touches, and psychological control—hallmarks of grooming that are well-documented by child welfare experts.

These concerns were reported multiple times to Family Services. However, because there was no single explicit physical act that met the current statutory threshold for prosecution, no meaningful intervention occurred. As a result, the behavior was allowed to be continued, and my child suffered harm that could have been prevented with earlier legal recognition and authority to act.

This experience exposed a critical gap in our child protection framework: grooming behaviors can be persistent, escalating, and profoundly damaging, yet remain legally invisible until physical abuse occurs. By the time that threshold is crossed, significant emotional and psychological damage has often already been done.

HB 1814 and HB 2551 address this gap by acknowledging the realities of how abuse develops and by empowering systems to respond before irreversible harm occurs. Early identification and intervention are essential when the alleged offender is a trusted adult or parent, where children are least able to protect themselves and most likely to be disbelieved.

I urge the committee to support HB 1814 and HB 2551 to continue strengthening laws that prioritize child safety, recognize grooming as a serious and actionable threat, and prevent children from being left unprotected due to limitations in current statutory definitions.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation and for your commitment to protecting children in Missouri.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: CRISSY CARSTEN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/12/2026 11:29 PM	
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I knew a young man that was full of life. He always had a smile on his face. I watched him play soccer as a young boy and thru the fall of his sophomore year. That fall he volunteered to coach an under 8 team. He taught those kids skills but most importantly a love for the game. Those little kids looked up to him. A few short months later he took his precious life because of sextortion. It shook everyone who knew him. It shook our entire community, and our soccer family. Little kids that adored their coach had to see the bad of our world... just because of greed. No family, child, or community should have to experience this. We must hold those accountable that prey on our children. Evan was an inspiration to many of us. He was a light. I stand with his family, friends, and community in support of Evan, as well as Sophie's Law. We must do better and we must protect our children.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: DAVID BARNES		PHONE NUMBER: 573-808-5544	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI ENA STATE COUNCIL		TITLE: MEMBER/REPRESENTATIVE	
ADDRESS: 5870 N HAWK ROAD			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65202
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: DEVIN DIDIER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 7:28 AM
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Our friends have been deceived and tormented by a Pedophile masquerading as a martial arts instructor.

He was able to drive a significant wedge into the family and promised the child they would run off together and be married and live happily ever after. Thankfully the mom and dad were able to recognize something was not right and were able to finally stop the grooming before it led to even more damage. We must be a voice for our children! Please help us stop sexual grooming!



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: JESSICA SEITZ		PHONE NUMBER: 573-415-6228	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI NETWORK AGAINST CHILD ABUSE		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 520 DIX RD, SUITE C			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65109
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KATY VELASQUEZ		PHONE NUMBER: 417-669-1256	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: FAMILY ADVOCACY SOLUTIONS		TITLE: DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 801 N. LINCOLN			
CITY: MONETT		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65708
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MELANIE STRONG		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/12/2026 8:07 PM	

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I am a teacher that has worked with students every day of my life for 4 years now. Whether it be in a classroom or tutoring online. I am a true believer that children are our future and the question is why shouldn't we protect them at all costs? We depend on them to one day to lead our country. To protect them from any grooming/sexortion and to enjoy their childhood is setting them up for success. Our job as the older generation is to pass down the ideals that our nation was founded on upon as well as help raise good humans. It is the utmost importance that kids get to experience not only their childhood but see examples of what we want them to be like in their life. Children are easier to target than ever before through social media accounts, electronics and probably more than I can even imagine. I see it everyday with my students and their electronics. I hear their conversations with one another that parents are probably not fully aware of how technologically intelligent their child is. This bill is just one step closer to help the younger generation succeed and grow up to be trauma free and be raised with no concern of them becoming victims.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: PAULA STONER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/12/2026 7:16 PM
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My name is Paula Stoner, and I work for a school district in Missouri. I am writing in support of HB 1814, legislation that helps protect children from grooming and sextortion.

In schools, we see firsthand how vulnerable students can be—especially online. Predators increasingly use digital platforms to manipulate, coerce, and exploit minors, often resulting in serious emotional and psychological harm. Many victims are afraid to report these crimes due to shame or fear of retaliation.

HB 1814 is an important step toward safeguarding children by addressing these evolving threats and holding offenders accountable. Protecting students' safety and well-being must remain a priority, and this legislation supports that goal.

I respectfully urge you to support HB 1814.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: PRESLEY WELDON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: RUSS TUTTLE		PHONE NUMBER: 913-940-3438	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: THE STOP TRAFFICKING PROJECT		TITLE: PRESIDENT/FUNDER	
ADDRESS: 7240 PARK ST.			
CITY: SHAWNEE		STATE: MO	ZIP: 66216
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: VELORIS JUNEMAN		PHONE NUMBER: 417-339-9857	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: PATHWAYS PROJECT COALITION OF THE OZARKS		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 8722 EAST STATE HIGHWAY 76			
CITY: REEDS SPRING		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65737
EMAIL: pathwayspc@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/12/2026 10:50 AM	

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Good Morning Chair and Members of the Committee,
My name is Veloris Juneman, and I am the Founder of the Pathways Project Coalition of the Ozarks. I am submitting testimony in strong support of HB 1814 (Warwick) and HB 2551 (Whaley) — two companion bills that take essential steps toward protecting Missouri’s children from sexual grooming, sextortion, and exploitation.
Every parent, educator, and community member wants our kids to grow up safe, healthy, and free from manipulation and abuse. Yet under current Missouri law, the act of grooming a minor — a deliberate and predatory pattern of behavior used to condition children for sexual exploitation — is not currently defined in statute in a way that allows prosecutors to act before abuse has already occurred. These bills change that.
As the founder of a coalition dedicated to preventing exploitation and supporting survivors, I have witnessed firsthand how predators use digital communication to gain trust and isolate vulnerable young people. Without clear statutory language and tools for law enforcement, many of these harmful patterns go unpunished until it is too late.
HB 1814 and HB 2551 do the following:

- **Define and criminalize “grooming of a minor” as engaging in a pattern of conduct with sexual intent that conditions, manipulates, or prepares a child for sexual activity — clarifying that intent may be proven by the context and pattern of actions, not just explicit statements.**
- **Strengthen penalties for nonconsensual dissemination of private sexual images (“sextortion”) and ensure minors and other vulnerable people are fully protected under the law.**
- **Require the Department of Public Safety to issue guidance on identifying grooming, responding to potential instances, and training professionals on investigation, prosecution, and victim support.**
- **Ensure that those convicted of grooming and related offenses are required to register as sex offenders, providing continuity with public safety goals.**

These bills provide a proactive legal framework that empowers law enforcement, gives prosecutors the clarity they need, and equips families and professionals with the resources to recognize and stop grooming before abuse escalates.
For the safety of Missouri’s children, especially in an era of ubiquitous online contact and digital risk, we strongly urge a favorable report on HB 1814 and HB 2551.
Thank you for your time and your service.

Respectfully,
Veloris Juneman
Founder, The Pathways Project Coalition of the Ozarks



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: WES STONER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/12/2026 7:11 PM
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I respectfully submit this testimony in support of HB 1814, which strengthens protections for children against grooming and sextortion.

Online platforms have made it easier for predators to manipulate and exploit minors through deception, coercion, and threats. Grooming and sextortion cause severe emotional harm and often go unreported due to fear and shame. Clear laws are necessary to intervene early and hold offenders accountable.

HB 1814 recognizes the seriousness of these crimes and prioritizes the safety and well-being of children. I urge your support for this important legislation to protect vulnerable youth from exploitation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Wes Stoner



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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: 1/13/2026 7:11 PM
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I submit this testimony in opposition to HB 1814.

While this bill contains provisions that, taken individually, may merit discussion or even support, HB 1814 combines too many substantial and consequential changes into a single, sweeping piece of legislation. The scope of this bill is simply too broad to be responsibly considered as one package.

HB 1814 simultaneously:

creates a new felony offense,
expands and restructures sex offender registry requirements,
adds new civil liability provisions,
alters long-standing criminal definitions,
and increases mandatory financial penalties tied to convictions.

Each of these areas carries serious legal, constitutional, and life-long consequences. Combining them into a single bill prevents meaningful public input, limits careful committee scrutiny, and forces legislators and citizens into an all-or-nothing decision on policies that should be debated and voted on separately.

Criminal law, especially when it involves permanent registries, long-term reporting requirements, and non-contact offenses, demands precision and restraint. Omnibus bills of this nature increase the risk of unintended consequences, over-criminalization, and erosion of proportionality in sentencing and post-conviction penalties.

Opposing HB 1814 does not mean opposing victim protection or accountability. It means insisting that policies of this magnitude be handled transparently, deliberately, and individually, so each proposal can stand or fall on its own merits.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 1814 and consider addressing its components through separate, narrowly tailored legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JEFFREY BARLOW		PHONE NUMBER: 573-680-6463	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSOCIATION		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 308 E HIGH STREET, SUITE 105			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: jeff@mjja.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/13/2026 8:43 AM	

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MJJA generally supports the intent of this bill - to enhance the protection of children.

However, It is a common and dangerous misconception that grooming is primarily a "stranger danger" issue. In reality, the vast majority of people who groom and sexually abuse minors are individuals the child already knows and trusts.

Statistical data consistently shows that over 90% of child sexual abuse and grooming cases are committed by someone within the child's circle of trust.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: LLM LISA L. MIZELL		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/12/2026 6:27 PM	
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The Child Protection Center is the child advocacy center providing services for Jackson and Cass Counties. We served over 900 children and families last year. Each year those we serve have been victims of abuse and the majority of which are sexual abuse. Our forensic interviewers assist members of the multi-disciplinary team investigating the allegations, including Children’s Division, law enforcement and prosecutors.”) I was pleased to see the bills related to grooming introduced in Missouri this year and wanted to submit comments based on our agency’s experience that we ask this Committee to be mindful of when considering changes to child abuse crimes in Missouri law.

Grooming” is the process through which an offender manipulates a child to gain their trust to sexually abuse them. Grooming behaviors are present in nearly all cases of sexual abuse that CPC staff are involved with each year. We are thankful to the sponsors of this legislation for recognizing the importance of this issue.

- I spoke with my team here before submitting comments about how grooming is prosecuted in child sexual abuse cases in our region. In our experience with cases involving “grooming” prosecutors have successfully used RSMo. Section 566.151 or “enticement of a child” to prosecute perpetrators and hold them accountable. Missouri’s enticement statute criminalizes engaging in any conduct to coax a child into engaging in unlawful sexual conduct, specifically “enticement of a child” as “A person twenty-one years of age or older commits the offense of enticement of a child if he or she persuades, solicits, coaxes, entices, or lures whether by words, actions or through communication via the internet or any electronic communication, any person who is less than seventeen years of age for the purpose of engaging in sexual conduct.”
- With this in mind, I want to ensure that any new legislation considered aligns, but does not duplicate, crimes currently on the books.
- I also want to draw attention to the proposed language in this legislation in 566.152 on page 2 which outlines parties who the crime of grooming would not apply to particularly educators, health care providers, mentors, parents and family members. As child abuse professionals, we know that over 90% of child sexual abuse is perpetrated by someone known to the child. A third are family members and 60% are acquaintances, many of which fall into the categories who could be covered by this legislation. We urge legislators to ensure that the language does not cause unintended consequences by shielding populations most likely to engage in grooming from being charged.
- However, it can be difficult to detect sexual grooming because some grooming behaviors resemble normal adult-child interactions. To prevent child sexual abuse, it is vital to identify sexual grooming behaviors that can be considered “red flag” behaviors. This is why community education around child sexual abuse prevention and identifying grooming behaviors as early as possible is so important and why our agency provides this programming in Kansas City.

Thank you for considering my input. CPC is happy to be a resource to Members of this Committee on this legislation and all child abuse-related legislation moving forward.