



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 1817		DATE: 2/19/2026	
COMMITTEE: Government Efficiency			
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 ADVOCAT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 11:59 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: CAMELLIA PETERSON		PHONE NUMBER: 417-726-9475	
REPRESENTING: AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY		TITLE: LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 4201 WILSON BLVD			
CITY: ARLINGTON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 22203
EMAIL: cpeterson@afphq.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:20 PM	

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Increased transparency and current data helps local governments and community organizations better meet the needs of the people in their communities. We urge the committee to pass HB1817.



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: JAMES HARRIS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-761-7875
REPRESENTING: FGA ACTION		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 122 E. HIGH., SUITE 200		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JAMES WHITFORD		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 7:06 PM
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February 18, 2026

Chairwoman Hausman, Vice Chair Mayhew, and Government Efficiency Committee Members;

I direct a gospel mission in Joplin, MO that my wife and I co-founded in 2000. For more than 25 years we have seen the good of compassionate, relationally-driven charity and how it can truly help people escape poverty.

Last year, we helped 126 people out of homelessness and 178 people land a job. Much of this success is due to our view of the human person—created in the image of God with a purpose and destiny to be a contributor. Unfortunately, we find many people are held back—not because of a lack of ability, but by the harmful incentives of handouts and “benefits cliffs” associated with welfare programs.

We know that the less a person is dependent on government and the more they depend on local community, instead, the better. So, the question, “How many people in my community are dependent on welfare?” is a commonsense question for a metric that can equip city leaders, business leaders, and local nonprofit leaders like me with a vitally important baseline from which we can begin to work on reducing welfare dependency.

Since founding our mission 26 years ago, I’ve also launched and direct a national initiative championing more relational, effective approaches to helping the poor: True Charity. We work in communities in 36 states through more than 290 poverty-fighting organizations serving more than 1,000,000 people in poverty every year. Seventy-seven of those organizations are in Missouri and align with the ideal that private, local, community-driven care is better and in their efforts to collaborate more effectively, need welfare data unique to their municipality rather than county-level data, alone.

HB 1817 will ensure welfare reporting transparency to equip caring leaders in communities across our state, invigorating greater community collaboration to solve problems of poverty and homelessness. If we want local communities to rally together to solve their problems, we need to make sure they’re equipped with the information they need to measure outcomes of progress or failure.

In support of HB 1817,

James Whitford
 CEO, True Charity

Watered Gardens Ministries



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: RUSTY PARKER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2026 9:59 AM
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Proposed Citizen Comment (Pro-HB 1817):

I support HB 1817 because transparency and accountability are foundational to public trust, particularly in smaller communities where citizens rely heavily on clear and accurate information about how public resources are administered. Releasing aggregate, non-identifiable data regarding public assistance usage promotes informed civic discussion without compromising individual privacy. Thoughtful transparency measures help ensure that policy decisions are guided by objective data rather than assumptions, while also reinforcing confidence that programs are operating fairly, efficiently, and as intended. HB 1817 represents a balanced approach that respects both public oversight and personal confidentiality.