



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2003		DATE: 2/17/2026	
COMMITTEE: Budget			
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: NATALIE BENTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/17/2026 12:00 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			



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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: 1/24/2026 12:43 PM	
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I'm submitting testimony in opposition to HB 2003 as introduced.

I want Missouri to invest in higher education, workforce development, and student opportunity.

But we cannot do that by turning an appropriations bill into a vehicle for political riders, coded earmarks, and vague restrictions that undermine fairness, transparency, and constitutional governance.

A budget should fund programs—not smuggle policy

HB 2003 includes provisions that function as substantive education policy rather than budgeting. For example, the bill prohibits the use of funds to “implement or support the Common Core Standards.”

Whatever one’s opinion of Common Core, this is not clean appropriations drafting. The phrase “implement or support” is broad enough to chill lawful academic activity, and it invites inconsistent enforcement. We should not write education policy through vague budget punishments.

Taxpayer-funded opportunity should be based on need—not coded population brackets
 HB 2003 includes programs defined by extremely specific city and county population ranges.

That is not how fair government allocates opportunity.

When a bill uses population math to quietly select who qualifies, it begins to look like special legislation and political favoritism—especially when the state could instead use objective statewide criteria such as workforce shortages, rural access, poverty rates, or measurable program outcomes.

Public funds must come with public guardrails

The bill also directs funds to private entities described in vague terms, without clear competitive selection standards, performance requirements, audit language, or conflict-of-interest protections.

Missourians deserve to know who receives public dollars, why they were chosen, what they must deliver, and how compliance will be measured. Without those protections, trust erodes—and legal exposure increases.

Until these changes are made, HB 2003 should not advance.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/17/2026 11:29 PM	
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Cut all unnecessary expenses and waste.