



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2044		DATE: 2/10/2026
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 "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/10/2026 11:11 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

I am in Support of this Bill. When both Parents of a Missouri Child are found by a Circuit Court to be unfit, every reasonable effort shall be made to place the children in the Custody of their Biological Grand-Parents. This is right-thing to strive for.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MARILYN MCCLURE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2026 3:45 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

Dear Honorable Representatives,
I assumed this was already law. Please pursue.
Thank you.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: PRECIOUS JONES		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2026 11:29 AM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

I am in full support of this bill. This bill is so important to families and the village! The foundation of family is built from grandpaerents! The rock of the family is usually the grandparent of the family. My son deceased my heart was shattered and still shattered, I didnt know how I would go on with life without one of my sons neing gone from this earth. God knew I would need my grandchildren my son left us. I must say it only by his children that me and my sons are able to go on with life. My grandchildren are our healing and whats getting us through this storm. I couldnt imgaine my grandbabies being with anyone else if something where to happen to their mother. I couldnt imagine my grandbabies going down a long line of other relatives. My sons are aa very Precious gift from God and love them dearly! BUT GRANDKIDS are a SPECIAL SPECIAL GIFT THEY ARE THE CHERRY ON TOP! To see your children create their own little children oh my GOD its a beautiful feeling! When the world is falling down around you your grandkids have the natural power to make an imperfect world look perfect!!!! I am all for grandparents rights!!!! Any bill that comes across to support building stronger laws to encourage foundations of our families I will be in support!!!



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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: 2/6/2026 2:00 PM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

HB 2044 should be rejected.

This bill replaces individualized judicial judgment with a statutory bias. By imposing a rebuttable presumption favoring equal or near-equal parenting time, the legislature is no longer asking courts to determine what is best for this child in this family. It is telling courts where to start—and implicitly, where to end.

That is a policy error with foreseeable consequences.

Custody cases are not abstract parenting debates. They involve power imbalances, safety risks, financial coercion, geographic constraints, and children whose needs do not fit clean schedules. HB 2044 ignores those realities and instead elevates a one-size-fits-all framework that increases litigation, increases risk, and decreases judicial flexibility.

This bill materially disadvantages protective parents. In real cases, abuse and coercive control often exist without perfect documentation or criminal convictions. By establishing a default expectation of equal time, HB 2044 forces the safer parent to disprove a legislative assumption—often at great financial and emotional cost. That is not neutrality. That is structural pressure.

The bill also burdens courts. Mandatory presumptions plus mandatory written findings guarantee longer hearings, more motions, more appeals, and more instability for children. Missouri’s family courts are already strained. HB 2044 adds complexity without adding protection.

Most concerning, the bill confuses parental entitlement with child welfare. Equal parenting time may be appropriate in some cases—but appropriateness must be determined by facts, not ideology. When statutes push outcomes instead of guiding analysis, children become collateral damage.

Missouri law already requires courts to consider frequent and meaningful contact with both parents when it is in the child’s best interests.

HB 2044 is not a clarification. It is an escalation—and an unnecessary one.

The legislature should not micromanage custody outcomes. Courts exist to do that work precisely because families are not interchangeable.

HB 2044 invites harm, fuels conflict, and undermines the core principle it claims to protect.

Footnotes / Legal Context

Missouri custody law is grounded in individualized best-interest analysis under §452.375, not predetermined outcomes.

Courts have consistently recognized parental rights as fundamental liberty interests requiring case-specific due process (see *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 (2000)).

Presumptive custody frameworks increase appeals, reversals, and post-judgment litigation—outcomes directly tied to instability for children and higher public cost.