



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2086		DATE: 1/21/2026	
COMMITTEE: Judiciary			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ANDY BAKKER		PHONE NUMBER: 816-319-2771	
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EMAIL: andygbakker@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 2:58 PM	

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Missouri has already made its position clear on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion mandates. In 2025, the Governor directed state agencies to eliminate DEI programs and requirements, reaffirming a commitment to equal treatment, merit-based standards, and constitutional governance.

However, DEI requirements continue to appear indirectly through professional and institutional rules, including within the practice of law. This creates confusion, inconsistency, and a lack of accountability, where DEI is effectively required despite having been rejected as state policy.

Supporters of DEI often claim it improves outcomes, but available research shows mixed or negligible results. Studies have found that mandatory DEI programs frequently fail to produce measurable improvements and, in some cases, increase division or ideological pressure rather than professionalism and performance.

HB 2086 brings clarity and alignment to Missouri law. It ensures that ideological frameworks rejected by the state are not quietly reimposed through licensing, accreditation, or professional requirements.

This bill protects fairness, transparency, and public trust by keeping Missouri focused on equal treatment under the law rather than compelled ideological compliance.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to support HB 2086.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF		PHONE NUMBER:	
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EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ANTONETTE PALUMBO		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
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This bill is regressive and feels like it is in line with anti-DEI policies that have been pushed over the past year. It is important as a competent attorney to be able to represent every member of the public and to work with anyone. Removing requirements for understanding implicit bias, inclusion, and equity only prevents lawyers from providing better representation to the citizens of Missouri.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
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I urge you to vote NO on HB2086 (Keathley), a bill that weakens critical continuing legal education (CLE) requirements for attorneys and jeopardizes the legal profession’s commitment to equity, justice, and ethical excellence. This bill reduces the annual ethics CLE requirement from three credits to two and eliminates the vital mandate that one credit address bias, diversity, inclusion, or cultural competency. These changes are not minor—they are a step backward for a legal system that must reflect the values of fairness and equality.

Ethics are the bedrock of the legal profession. Lawyers hold immense power over clients’ lives, liberties, and livelihoods. Reducing ethics training from three hours to two sends a dangerous message that maintaining ethical rigor is optional rather than essential. For example, a lawyer unaware of evolving ethical standards in client confidentiality or conflicts of interest could irreparably harm a client’s case. Diluting ethics education risks normalizing complacency in a profession that demands vigilance.

Equally alarming is the removal of explicit training on bias, diversity, and cultural competency. Systemic inequities persist in our courts: Studies show that implicit bias affects jury selection, sentencing, and even how lawyers interact with clients from marginalized communities. Without targeted education, attorneys may unintentionally perpetuate disparities. Consider a public defender who misinterprets a client’s cultural norms as dishonesty, damaging trust and case outcomes. Or a corporate attorney whose lack of cultural competency undermines efforts to build inclusive workplaces. Training in these areas equips lawyers to recognize and dismantle barriers—whether in representing a client with limited English proficiency or addressing microaggressions in the workplace.

Proponents may argue these requirements are burdensome, but three hours annually is a modest investment for professionals tasked with upholding justice. Law firms, corporate legal departments, and solo practitioners already integrate CLE into their workflows; reducing credits solves no pressing problem. Conversely, eliminating bias training ignores the lived experiences of marginalized communities who rely on lawyers to advocate for them in a system that often fails to see their humanity.

HB2086 undermines progress toward a legal system that serves all people equitably. Vote NO to preserve standards that foster accountability, cultural humility, and ethical excellence. The integrity of our profession—and the trust of the public—depend on it.



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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:	
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HB 2086 represents a direct and improper legislative intrusion into the constitutional authority of the judiciary. The regulation of attorneys—including admission to practice and continuing legal education requirements—is vested exclusively in the Missouri Supreme Court, not the General Assembly. This authority is fundamental to the separation of powers and the independence of the courts.

While the bill’s first subsection acknowledges the Supreme Court’s exclusive authority to license and regulate attorneys, subsections (2) and (3) immediately contradict that acknowledgment by statutorily prohibiting the Court from requiring certain categories of continuing legal education and by declaring that this statute shall control over Missouri Supreme Court Rule 15.05 in the event of conflict. This is not a clarification of authority; it is a legislative override of judicial governance.

Continuing legal education exists to ensure attorney competence, ethical practice, and the fair administration of justice.

Subjects such as bias awareness, cultural competency, and professional responsibility are not political mandates—they are tools that courts nationwide recognize as relevant to effective representation and public confidence in the legal system. Whether and how such topics are included in CLE requirements is a professional and judicial determination, not a legislative one.

HB 2086 does not improve access to justice, reduce legal costs, protect defendants, or enhance public safety. Instead, it establishes a dangerous precedent: that the legislature may selectively dictate what the judiciary may or may not require of attorneys based on political preference. Once this boundary is crossed, there is no principled stopping point.

If the General Assembly may prohibit one category of CLE today, it may mandate or prohibit others tomorrow—eroding judicial independence and politicizing the regulation of the legal profession.

For these reasons, HB 2086 should be rejected. The separation of powers is not a technicality; it is a constitutional safeguard. Missouri’s courts must remain free to regulate the legal profession without legislative interference.

I urge the committee to vote NO on HB 2086.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: SHARON GEUEA JONES		PHONE NUMBER: 573-808-2156	
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CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM	
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