



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 2097</b>		DATE: <b>1/14/2026</b>
COMMITTEE: <b>Special Committee on Rural Issues</b>		
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>ALAYNA FORCK</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-893-4181</b>
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION</b>		TITLE:
ADDRESS: <b>3118 EMERALD LANE</b>		
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>
		ZIP: <b>65109</b>
EMAIL: <b>aforck@mocorn.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 4:50 PM</b>
<b>THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.</b>		



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>BEN TRAVLOS</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-635-3819</b>
REPRESENTING: <b>MO SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION</b>		TITLE:
ADDRESS: <b>734 S. COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE</b>		
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>
		ZIP: <b>65109</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 12:00 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>BILLY POLANSKY</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-514-4174</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>COLUMBIA CENTER FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE</b>		TITLE: <b>EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>PO BOX 1742</b>			
CITY: <b>COLUMBIA</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65205</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 12:00 AM</b>	
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>GANNON SEYER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 3:39 PM</b>
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**I support the passage HB 2097.**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>HEATHER FLETCHER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>MISSOURI FARMERS CARE</b>		TITLE: <b>PROGRAM DIRECTOR</b>
ADDRESS: <b>734 S. COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE</b>		
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>
		ZIP: <b>65109</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 12:00 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>LYRA NOCE</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 3:35 PM</b>	

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Agriculture remains one of Missouri’s most vital economic drivers, employing nearly 460,000 people statewide. The average Missouri farmer is approximately 57 years old, and while Missouri has the second-highest number of farms in the nation, that number continues to decline. These realities underscore the importance of investing in strong agricultural education programs that prepare the next generation of farmers, scientists, and land stewards.

When discussing the implementation of agricultural education, the most significant barriers districts face are staffing and sustainable funding. Without consistent resources, even the strongest programs struggle to maintain long-term impact.

My name is Lyra Noce, and I am the Garden Educator at the Southern Boone Learning Garden in Ashland, Missouri. This program is operated by the Southern Boone School District in partnership with the Southern Boone Learning Garden nonprofit organization. The Learning Garden began in 2007 as an after-school garden club serving just 13 students, led by a small group of dedicated parents and volunteers. Since that time, the program has grown significantly in both scope and community support. In 2017, the Southern Boone County School District formally adopted the program, providing full-time staffing support with an educator and instructional aide.

Today, the Learning Garden includes:

- 40 raised garden beds
- Fruit trees and a field garden
- Hoop houses for extended crop production
- An indoor/outdoor classroom constructed in 2020
- A planned greenhouse for future expansion

The Learning Garden is fully integrated into the school-day schedule. Every pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade class visits the garden monthly for hands-on instruction, reaching approximately 850 students each year. Our program focuses on garden-based learning, nutrition education, agriculture, environmental science, and conservation. Through collaboration with classroom teachers, our lessons align directly with Missouri learning standards and curriculum requirements.

My predecessor and I had the opportunity to participate in the state pilot program for science and agriculture education. We found it to be an excellent resource for districts that do not already have established programming. The MySci curriculum developed by Washington University provided high-quality, easy-to-implement lessons that integrated seamlessly into classroom instruction. While our district already had a well-developed program, the pilot demonstrated how accessible and effective these resources can be for schools across the state. The benefits to our students are measurable. We have seen:

- Increased enthusiasm for agricultural learning

**Improved nutrition awareness and healthier food choices**

**Greater interest in conservation and natural resources**

**Increased enrollment in high school agriculture courses**

**Growth in FFA participation**

**We are not only preparing future farmers and scientists we are helping students develop a lifelong connection to food, land, and learning. Our district is fortunate to have strong community support and a committed nonprofit partner. However, many districts across Missouri do not have access to these same resources.**

**Agricultural education programs should not depend solely on local fundraising or volunteer capacity. They should be accessible to every student in our state. I respectfully urge you to support HB 2097 and continue investing in agricultural education for Missouri's children. These programs strengthen our workforce pipeline, support rural communities, and preserve Missouri's agricultural legacy.**

**Thank you for your time and your commitment to education and agriculture.**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>MARK FIEGENBAUM</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-690-8580</b>
REPRESENTING: <b>MISSOURI FARM BUREAU</b>		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: <b>MO</b>
EMAIL:		ZIP:
ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 12:00 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>OTTO FAJEN</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-634-3202</b>	
REPRESENTING: <b>MISSOURI NEA</b>		TITLE: <b>DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE POLICY</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>1810 E. ELM ST.</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65101</b>
EMAIL: <b>otto.fajen@mnea.org</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>In-Person</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 2:54 PM</b>	
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The Association supports expanding this pilot program to a voluntary statewide optional program.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>SARAH BERRY</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:      ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 10:12 AM</b>
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I am submitting opposition to HB 2097 at this time due to the absence of publicly available bill language. Although this bill is scheduled for hearing, the actual text has not been posted, preventing legislators, school districts, parents, and the public from evaluating the scope, cost, governance structure, or implementation requirements of converting a pilot program into a statewide mandate. A proposal that expands an educational program statewide necessarily raises questions regarding funding sources, curriculum control, local district discretion, staffing requirements, and long-term administrative obligations. Without access to the bill text, it is impossible to assess whether this legislation creates unfunded mandates, shifts authority away from local school boards, or imposes requirements that rural districts may be least equipped to absorb. Meaningful public participation requires transparency. Advancing legislation to a hearing without the operative language undermines informed testimony and legislative accountability. For these reasons, I oppose HB 2097 until full bill text is publicly available and sufficient time is provided for review and comment.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>PERRY GORRELL</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>573-751-4446</b>	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION</b>		TITLE: <b>CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS</b>	
ADDRESS: <b>205 JEFFERSON STREET</b>			
CITY: <b>JEFFERSON CITY</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>	ZIP: <b>65102</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>1/14/2026 12:00 AM</b>	
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