



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2396		DATE: 2/25/2026	
COMMITTEE: Elementary and Secondary Education			
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: 2/25/2026 11:50 PM	

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.
I am in Support of this Bill with the shortage of Teachers across all Missouri School Districts.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JENNIFER BALDWIN		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/24/2026 9:46 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

I am a 25-year veteran teacher currently employed as a high school librarian by a rural district in southwest Missouri. I'm officially able to retire (at the age of 46) at the end of this school year. This bill would allow me to keep teaching in Missouri until I max out retirement (and possibly four years beyond that) instead of taking my teaching experience into surrounding states (Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Kansas are all within 30 minutes of my home in Joplin) and "double dipping" until a regular retirement age. What a positive step for my Missouri students!

Passing this bill also helps my rural district fill positions with certified teachers by eliminating the current limitations on Critical Shortage. Rural districts are already at a disadvantage when trying to recruit and retain teachers; our rural students deserve the best education we can provide them.

I encourage you to pass this bill, without any reservations!



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KERRY SACHETTA		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2026 9:52 AM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 2396. This legislation modifies Missouri law regarding retired school employees returning to work while continuing to receive retirement benefits. HB 2396 represents a practical and targeted solution to ongoing teacher workforce challenges while maintaining important safeguards for the integrity of Missouri’s retirement systems.

Under current law, retirees of the Public School Retirement System of Missouri (PSRS) may return to work full-time for no more than four years and only if a district demonstrates a “critical shortage.” HB 2396 would modify this structure beginning July 1, 2027, by allowing PSRS retirees to return to full-time classroom positions indefinitely while continuing to receive their retirement benefits. The bill removes the four-year limit and eliminates the requirement that districts formally demonstrate a shortage after that date. Importantly, the legislation maintains appropriate guardrails: retirees may not return in administrative roles, including principals or central office positions, and they may not serve as superintendents, consistent with prior law. This ensures the bill is focused squarely on strengthening classroom instruction.

For retirees in the Public Education Employee Retirement System of Missouri (PEERS), the legislation does not create a comparable expansion. The existing four-year limitation and shortage requirements remain in place. This distinction reflects a measured approach that prioritizes addressing certified teacher shortages while maintaining current parameters for noncertificated staff.

HB 2396 also preserves critical fiscal safeguards. Retired teachers returning to work under the new provisions will not pay employee retirement contributions and will not accrue additional service credit. At the same time, school districts will continue to pay the employer contribution to the retirement system. By preventing additional pension accrual while maintaining employer contributions, the bill protects the financial stability of the retirement system while allowing districts to benefit from experienced educators.

The legislation further establishes clear salary requirements to ensure fairness and transparency. Districts must compensate returning retirees according to the district’s established salary schedule and align pay with comparable experience and education levels. Districts may reduce compensation by the employee retirement contribution percentage. If a district does not maintain a salary schedule, compensation must fall within board-approved limits. These provisions help ensure equity and prevent preferential treatment.

Beginning July 1, 2027, districts will no longer be required to post positions for a month, formally declare a “critical shortage,” or comply with the existing one percent or five-employee cap applicable to PSRS retirees. Until that date, current restrictions remain in place. This delayed implementation provides districts and the retirement system adequate time to prepare for the transition.

In summary, HB 2396 makes it significantly easier for retired teachers to return to Missouri classrooms on a long-term basis, provides districts with greater staffing flexibility, maintains employer retirement contributions to protect system funding, and preserves clear limits preventing retirees from returning to administrative leadership roles. The bill strikes an appropriate balance between workforce needs and fiscal responsibility, ultimately supporting Missouri students by allowing experienced educators to continue serving in the classroom.

Thank you for your consideration.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: STEPHANIE WATSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/23/2026 4:40 PM	

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

As both a Missouri resident and a school board member, I have seen firsthand the staffing challenges districts continue to face. While we remain committed to recruiting and developing new educators, many districts still struggle to fill critical teaching positions with qualified candidates. House Bill 2396 provides an important and practical solution by allowing districts greater flexibility to utilize experienced retired educators without unnecessary administrative barriers.

Just as importantly, this legislation respects the integrity of the teacher retirement system. Missouri educators dedicate decades of service to our students and communities, and their retirement benefits are earned through years of commitment and contribution. Allowing retired teachers to return to the classroom without penalty honors that service while also allowing districts to benefit from their experience and expertise. This approach strengthens our schools without undermining the retirement system that educators have worked hard to earn.

Retired teachers bring invaluable instructional knowledge, mentorship, and stability to our schools. Their presence supports student achievement, strengthens school culture, and provides continuity during a time when educator recruitment remains challenging.

Most importantly, this legislation helps ensure that every student has access to a qualified, capable teacher. House Bill 2396 is a thoughtful, responsible solution that balances workforce flexibility, respect for educator retirement, and the needs of Missouri residents.

I respectfully encourage everyone to fully support House Bill 2396.

Thank you for your service and for your continued commitment to Missouri's students, educators, and communities.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ALEXIA HIGBEE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 9:48 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

I am writing in opposition to this bill. This bill would allow teachers to retire, collect their retirement, then return to teaching INDEFINITELY which would cause financial damage to our retirement system—and penalize young people that we want to get into the teaching profession.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: DEBORAH LITWILLER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 6:58 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

As a retired teacher and a member of PSRS I am opposed to HB2396. It could require an increased contribution of both the active teacher and the school district employing them. This would be a hindrance in hiring young teachers, already a problem. There are many things that could be done to alleviate the shortage of qualified teachers rather than relying on already retired teachers and I encourage the committee to continue focusing on these.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: MIKE HARRIS		PHONE NUMBER: 615-202-3579	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION		TITLE: GOVERNMENT RELATIONS MANAGER	
ADDRESS:			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65205
EMAIL: mharris@msta.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 12:01 PM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: NANCY COPENHAVER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 6:11 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

As a retired teacher and a member of PSRS I am opposed to HB2396. Because it could require an increased contribution of both the active teacher and the school district employing them, this would be a hinderance in hiring young teachers, already a problem. There are many things that could be done to alleviate the shortage of qualified teachers rather than relying on already retired teachers and I encourage the committee to continue focusing on these.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: OTTO FAJEN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-3202	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI NEA		TITLE: DIRECTOR OF LEGISLATIVE POLICY	
ADDRESS: 1810 E. ELM ST.			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: otto.fajen@mnea.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 11:53 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: SUSAN G TURK		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 11:29 PM
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I am opposed to HB2396 because it would be a hindrance to hiring young teachers. Find other ways to alleviate the teacher shortage such as increasing teacher pay.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: MARIA WALDEN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-301-9658	
REPRESENTING: MO RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOC.		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: MIKE MOOREFIELD		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: PSRS/PEERS		TITLE: CHIEF COUNSEL	
ADDRESS: 3210 W. TRUMAN BLVD			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65109
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/25/2026 12:00 AM	
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