



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026	
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 DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 11:37 PM
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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: BRANDEN RATHERT		PHONE NUMBER: 573-751-8355
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MO. ATTORNEY GENERAL's OFFICE		TITLE: POLICY
ADDRESS:		
CITY:	STATE: MO	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: JAY SCHROEDER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI FOP		TITLE: PRESIDENT
ADDRESS: 715 JEFFERSON ST		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: MARK BRUNS		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI VALOR ALLIANCE		TITLE:
ADDRESS: PO BOX 2221		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65102
EMAIL: mark@brunslobby.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 10:04 AM
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Missouri Valor Alliance supports HB2498.		



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: PAT KELLY		PHONE NUMBER: 314-726-4747	
REPRESENTING: MUNICIPAL LEAGUE METRO STL		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 11911 DORSETT RD.			
CITY: MARYLAND HEIGHTS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63043
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: SCOTT SWAIN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-230-8138	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI POLICE CHIEFS ASSOC.		TITLE: LOBBYIST	
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EMAIL: scott@swaingroup.biz	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 1:12 PM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: TIM GARRISON		PHONE NUMBER: 417-988-3460	
REPRESENTING: MO OFC OF PROSECUTION SVCS & MO ASSN OF PROSECUTING ATTYS		TITLE:	
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CITY: JEFF CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ANTOINE WHITE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 8:56 PM	

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Testimony in Opposition to HB 2498
 Missouri House of Representatives
 Children and Families Committee

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Antoine White. I submit this testimony in strong opposition to HB 2498, which expands the certification of juveniles for prosecution in adult criminal court.

Certification does not make communities safer. It exposes children to an adult system that is violent, not rehabilitative, and associated with higher recidivism. Missouri already struggles with high recidivism. The Missouri Department of Corrections has reported three year recidivism rates in the range of 35 percent for people released from prison. A recent report noted that about 31.6 percent of people released from Missouri prisons return within three years. When more than one third of people coming out of prison are back within three years, this is evidence that incarceration is failing as a rehabilitative tool.

The racial impact of juvenile certification in Missouri is well documented. A Public Integrity investigation found that in 2009, 64 percent of juveniles prosecuted as adults in Missouri were African American, even though Black youth made up only about 15 percent of the state juvenile population ages 10 to 17. In St. Louis City, data from the 22nd Circuit Family Court show that Black children are nearly five times as likely as white children to be referred to juvenile court. In St. Louis County, a racial and ethnic disparities report found that Black youth were 2.65 times more likely to be held in secure detention before adjudication and 1.83 times more likely to receive a formal petition, compared to white youth.

State level planning documents for Missouri’s juvenile system acknowledge this reality directly. The Missouri RED Action Plan states that disparities for Black youth exist at all contact points within the juvenile justice system, and that the greatest disparities occur at the initial referral or arrest stage. HB 2498 would expand the use of certification in a system that already treats Black children more harshly at every step. That is not equal justice.

National research confirms that transferring youth to adult court increases recidivism. A review by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention found that juvenile transfer policies have not deterred youth crime and that youth transferred to adult court have higher recidivism rates than

comparable youth retained in juvenile court. A study summarized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Sentencing Project reports that youth transferred to the adult system are 34 percent more likely to be re arrested for violent or other crime than youth kept in the juvenile system.

Additional research shows that incarceration itself increases the risk of future justice involvement. The Sentencing Project has documented that spending time in juvenile detention raises the odds that young people will be arrested and incarcerated in adulthood. In other words, the deeper we push youth into confinement and adult prosecution, the more we are building the next generation of cases, not preventing them.

By contrast, leading national organizations have shown that jurisdictions can safely reduce youth confinement and racial disparities by moving away from punitive approaches and toward community based, developmentally appropriate responses. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's youth justice initiatives demonstrate that reducing out of home placements and centering racial equity can lower confinement without harming public safety. The Vera Institute of Justice has shown that keeping more sixteen and seventeen year olds in the juvenile system, rather than the adult system, can produce net fiscal savings and better public safety outcomes.

HB 2498 moves Missouri in the opposite direction. It expands prosecutorial tools to push children into the adult system in a context where:

- Black children are already more likely to be arrested, detained, petitioned, and certified
- Missouri's recidivism rates show that incarceration is not functioning as rehabilitation
- National research shows that transfer to adult court increases reoffending

Once a child is certified and convicted as an adult in Missouri, they face lifelong consequences. Missouri does not have a comprehensive Clean Slate law that would automatically seal or expunge records after a period of rehabilitation. A juvenile who receives an adult felony conviction can carry that record into every corner of adult life, including employment, housing, higher education, military service, professional licensing, and access to credit. This is not simply a sentence. It is a limit on the success and stability of that person's entire life.

There is also a moral contradiction that should weigh heavily on lawmakers. In our country, a man with multiple felony convictions can run for the presidency, raise millions of dollars, and be treated as fully capable of leadership and redemption in the public square. At the same time, this bill would make it easier to strip children in Missouri of their future before they are even old enough to vote. If we believe in second chances and redemption for adults in positions of power, we must at minimum extend that belief to children who are still developing and who often come from communities shaped by poverty, trauma, and systemic neglect.

Children are not finished products. Their brains, identities, and life circumstances are still forming. The purpose of a juvenile justice system should be transformation, healing, and age appropriate accountability. HB 2498 chooses punishment, permanent labeling, and exclusion instead. The evidence from Missouri's own data and from national research is clear. Certification increases recidivism, deepens racial disparity, and weakens public safety over time.

If Missouri is serious about reducing crime and strengthening communities, it should invest in diversion, restorative justice, trauma informed services, mental health care, education and employment pathways, and robust record clearing and Clean Slate reforms. These strategies are supported by the best available evidence from organizations such as the Sentencing Project, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Vera Institute of Justice, and related research partners.

For these reasons, and in light of the data and research cited here, I respectfully urge the Committee to reject HB 2498.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: CAMMIE STORM		PHONE NUMBER: 417-280-6473
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: JUST ANOTHER HUMAN		TITLE:
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CITY: WEST PLAINS		STATE: MO ZIP: 65775
EMAIL: camlnichols75@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/17/2026 3:30 AM
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but procedural efficiency for the system does not equal justice for the child. HB 2498 improves convenience for law enforcement and prosecutors without adding meaningful safeguards for due process, trauma-informed care, or rehabilitation outcomes.

Missouri should be moving toward policies that:

- reduce juvenile incarceration,
- limit adult prosecution of minors,
- invest in diversion and restorative justice,
- and protect children from permanent harm caused by contact with the adult criminal system.

HB 2498 does none of these things.

As a human rights advocate, I cannot support legislation that prioritizes punishment and surveillance over the well-being and future of children. I respectfully urge the committee to reject HB 2498 and to pursue policies that genuinely protect both public safety and the rights of youth.

Respectfully submitted,

Cammie Storm
Just Another Human
West Plains, Missouri



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: CLIFTON DAVIS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-590-1107	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI JUSTICE COALITION		TITLE: ORGANIZER	
ADDRESS: 4608 DERBY RIDGE DR			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65202
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: DAKOTA D JONES		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 9:29 PM	
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HB 2498 moves the juvenile justice system in Missouri one step closer towards treating youth like adults, even prior to a court ruling towards such a course of action being necessary. The expansion of fingerprinting, database searches, and records creation can lead young people being labeled early in life, which can haunt them for the rest of their lives. An increased need for prosecutor involvement, reporting to law enforcement records, and making parents face the law for the crime of a child's habitual behavior tends to move the system away from the idea of rehabilitation towards the objectives of punishment. It is also important for Missouri not to undo a system where youth have the opportunity to learn, grow, and modify, rather than getting stuck for life.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: DENA NOTZ		PHONE NUMBER: 417-260-2003	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: COLLECTIVELY CHANGING CORRECTIONS		TITLE: PRESIDENT	
ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 102			
CITY: ROBY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65557
EMAIL: Cccforchange24@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 11:33 AM	

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Please don't pass such a terrible bill. If any of your children ever commit a crime, or are accused of committing a crime and end up being tried as an adult... you will be glad that bills like this have been stopped. Of course, if you have money for an attorney you may not even have to be worried about that. But many of those who would be affected by this bill don't have that advantage. And thats the whole point. These disadvantages are probably the very reason they could end up in a situation where they were involved in crime as a young person. They are products of their environment. An environment they have no control over. Why are we not helping them before it gets to this point? Thats what you should all be focused on, instead you just keep trying to do damage control after it already too late. This has to stop. Our young people are being set up for failure and Missouri is allowing this set-up and punishing the victims of a broken system.

Please do the right thing and use good judgement when it comes to how Missouri handles young people. They need help, not more things stacked against them. How about a bill that requires help be given to a juvenile, and a re-evaluation, before they are sentenced? Why are we so quick to lock up our young people in Missouri? What is the agenda? These young people need help, not prison.

Déna Notz
 Collectively Changing Corrections
 417-260-2003



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: DONNA BRADLEY-JAEGER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 10:36 AM	
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Children should not be tried as adults unless they are 18 or older! Everything should be done to rehabilitate them!



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: EMILY JOHNSTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 4:13 PM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ERICA WILLIAMS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 11:25 AM	
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an individual is not mentally classified as an adult until the age of 25. Legally they changed everything to 21 of the legal age to buy alcohol and cigarettes. so the least yall can do is raise the age to 21 for being a juvenile



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: GWEN SMITH		PHONE NUMBER: 314-324-9656	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMPOWER MISSOURI		TITLE: CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY MANAGER	
ADDRESS: 4016 WINNEBAGO STREET			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63116
EMAIL: gwen@empowermissouri.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 7:22 PM	
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As the largest and oldest anti-poverty non-profit in our state, Empower Missouri is committed to improving the quality of life for all Missouri residents through advocacy. Since our inception, Empower Missouri has focused on the criminal justice system and its impacts. Our Community Justice Coalition consists of community advocates and organizations from across the state who work with those who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. Many coalition members are formerly incarcerated or have currently incarcerated loved ones, and all are connected by a vision for a future without mass incarceration.

We are providing testimony today in opposition to HB 2498, sponsored by Representative Christ, which would make a host of changes to Missouri’s juvenile justice system. These changes, taken together, would almost certainly lead to an increase in the number of youths being certified as adults, a trend that has already been on the rise in recent years (annual reports from the Missouri Juvenile & Family Division show that 2020 saw only 31 youths certified, while 2024 saw 53 youths certified). HB 2498 would expand the role of prosecutors in youth transfers, requiring earlier consultations with prosecuting attorneys and allowing them to file motions for transfer. It would also expand law enforcement access to juvenile data: current law keeps juvenile records largely confidential, with specific exceptions. HB 2498 would require juvenile officers to share juvenile criminal history data with statewide systems used by law enforcement, creating a “juvenile criminal history database.” The bill also proposes changes to how the Juvenile Detention Assessment (JDTA) is utilized, by requiring the assessment to be shared up front with the prosecution, and mandating that juvenile officers consider all charges submitted by law enforcement in the assessment.

No matter the severity of the crime, the bottom line is that kids are different from adults. This sentiment is expressed in multiple Supreme Court rulings, from *In re Gault* to *Miller v. Alabama*, and is also based firmly in brain science. The prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision-making, executive function, impulse control, and long-term planning, is not fully developed until age 25. Adolescents are more easily influenced by external factors, such as their environment, than their adult counterparts. Most children naturally grow out of delinquent behavior, but incarceration can be counterproductive to this process. This impact is even greater for those who have been certified as adults: children in adult correctional facilities are 34 percent more likely to recidivate than those within the juvenile system. Youth detention resulted in a 31 percent decline in the likelihood of graduating from high school and a 25 percent increase in the likelihood of being arrested as an adult. System-involved youth already have a higher likelihood of having mental health disorders. Youth incarceration has a hugely detrimental impact on outcomes throughout the life course, and as such, should be used extremely sparingly, as only an absolute last resort in the most extreme cases.

In 2023, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) issued a resolution calling for “legislation or policies that limit access to juvenile justice (law enforcement, courts, probation, corrections) records,” to protect youth from the fact that “once records are available outside the justice system, it is virtually impossible to safeguard the information from further disclosure and each time a juvenile record is made available in an online database or accessed by a new source, a youth’s exposure to collateral consequences increases.” The proposed “juvenile criminal history database” goes against this recommendation and could lead to unintended consequences for youth.

The role of a Juvenile Officer in Missouri is a critical one: Officers file juvenile cases and operate as the "prosecutor" in juvenile delinquency, child abuse, and neglect cases. Some violent offenses require a mandatory certification hearing, and currently, the Juvenile Officer "may" consult the Prosecutor on these cases. HB 2498 proposes a significant change by requiring the Juvenile Officer and the Prosecutor to consult each other on every felony case referred to the JO by law enforcement, a dramatic increase in work. This bill would require the JO and the Prosecuting Attorney to consult on an estimated 5000-6000 more cases than they currently do. Felonies committed by juveniles are already being reviewed by competent and experienced Juvenile Officers, who have specialized knowledge of juveniles and youthful offending. There is no need for this duplication of work: Missouri Prosecutors have enough to do already without looking over the shoulders of JOs on thousands of additional cases.

There is also a concern that increased prosecutor involvement may lead to a politicization of juvenile cases. Now, juvenile certifications are removed from media and political pressure, with very few requests for access to certification hearings. Prosecutors, however, talk to the media frequently, often using press releases for a specific agenda. This bill may bring media pressure into the certification process and could risk more kids being certified simply for political gain.

HB 2498 would create more pathways for youth to be certified as adults. The impact would likely be disproportionately felt by Black youth, who are already certified at a higher rate than their white peers. In 2024, Black youth accounted for over 81% of youth certified as adults in Missouri (from the 2024 Juvenile Annual Report). There are many factors at every step of the criminal justice system that lead to this overrepresentation, and increased involvement from prosecutors in the certification process, as outlined in HB 2498, could exacerbate this disparity.

Empower Missouri joins other youth justice advocates in urging a no vote on HB 2498. We appreciate your time and consideration.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: GWEN SMITH MOORE		PHONE NUMBER: 314-324-9656	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMPOWER MISSOURI		TITLE: CRIMINAL JUSTICE POLICY MANAGER	
ADDRESS: 1750 JEFFERSON ST			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65110
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JILL BOLLWERK		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 3:22 PM
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The sneaky provision in the statute of state control of libraries is abhorrent



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: KERRY COLOMBO		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 11:43 PM

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This life changing decisions should NEVER be in the hands of the prosecuting attorney. Please do not pass this bill.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KHANIKA HARPER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 10:47 AM	
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Testimony in Opposition to HB 2498 – Certification of a Juvenile for Trial as an Adult

House Children and Families Committee
 Position: Oppose
 Bill sponsor: Rep. Brad Christ (with Rep. Mike Costlow)

Chair and members of the Committee—thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to HB 2498. While the bill is framed as a public safety measure, its practical effect is to ****expand juvenile surveillance, increase pathways into adult prosecution, weaken evidence-based detention safeguards, and deepen racial and economic disparities—at significant long-term cost to Missouri taxpayers and communities.**

1) HB 2498 expands fingerprinting and permanent data-sharing for youth—far beyond violent felonies

HB 2498 changes fingerprinting from “felony if committed by an adult” to any “reportable offense” under §43.506, and it ****repeals protections designed to avoid revealing the juvenile’s name**** to the central repository.

Missouri’s “reportable offenses” include all felonies, Class A misdemeanors, DUI-related violations, certain enhancement-eligible offenses, and all cases under Chapter 566 (sexual offenses), among others.

This is a classic “net-widening” approach: more youth—arrested for a broader set of allegations—will have biometrics and identifiers captured and stored, even though many arrests never result in a petition, adjudication, or conviction.

2) HB 2498 makes juvenile records broadly accessible through MULES—undermining confidentiality

The bill requires detention, adjudication/delinquency, and custody information to be reported to the central repository and makes it available to criminal justice agencies through MULES for “administration of criminal justice.”

That is a major policy shift away from the longstanding principle that youth records should be limited and rehabilitative in purpose—because adolescence is uniquely responsive to intervention, and because lifelong labeling increases harm.

3) Trying youth as adults increases violence and reoffending—hurting public safety

A large body of research shows that moving youth into the adult system does not deter crime and tends to increase reoffending and violence:

The CDC’s systematic review found that transfer to the adult system typically increases rather than decreases” violence among transferred youth.**

The Community Guide (evidence review) reports a median 33.7% increase in violent rearrests for transferred youth compared with similarly situated youth retained in juvenile systems.

OJJDP materials summarizing the research similarly caution that youth processed in adult systems face increased risks and worse outcomes.

Bottom line: policies that make adult processing easier or more likely may feel tough, but they can increase future victimization—the opposite of public safety.

4) Adult-system exposure raises risk of severe harm (including suicide)

When youth are pushed toward adult detention environments (even pretrial or post-certification), the risks escalate dramatically. For example, national reporting has found youth in adult jails are far more likely to die by suicide than youth in juvenile facilities, with widely cited analysis finding 36x higher suicide risk in adult jails versus juvenile detention.

Any policy that increases adult-system entanglement for adolescents should be judged against these well-documented harms.

5) HB 2498 weakens Missouri’s evidence-based detention screening (JDTA)

Missouri’s JDTA is described by the state as evidence-based and scientifically validated, and Missouri Supreme Court policy has required detention screening using the JDTA.

HB 2498, however, provides that use of JDTA (or other assessments) shall be used as a guideline but shall not be mandatory” and expands prosecutorial access to completed JDTA forms.

When you loosen an evidence-based safeguard, you predictably get more detention—which is expensive, destabilizing for youth and families, and linked to worse long-term outcomes.

6) The bill is likely to worsen racial disparities Missouri already documents

Missouri has acknowledged that disparities for Black youth exist “at all contact points” in the juvenile system.

Missouri’s own youth services reporting also shows disproportionate minority commitments relative to the youth population.

And locally, St. Louis County’s disparity report shows that in 2022, 6 youth were certified to adult court—and all 6 were Black male youth.

HB 2498 expands the pipeline (fingerprinting, data-sharing, prosecutorial access, non-mandatory screening). When disparities already exist, expanding the pipeline expands the disparity.

7) Criminalizing parents/guardians will punish poverty and instability—not fix root causes

HB 2498 adds a new mechanism to charge parents/guardians with endangering the welfare of a child (2nd degree) if they “recklessly fail or refuse” to prevent a child from being a repeat offender for matters within juvenile court jurisdiction.

This approach risks punishing caregivers who are already facing barriers—lack of childcare, transportation, mental health supports, stable housing, or access to services—without actually reducing youth offending. It can also **reduce cooperation with schools, courts, and service providers if families fear prosecution.**

8) Cost impacts: higher system costs now, higher victimization and corrections costs later

Direct cost pressures HB 2498 can increase:

More fingerprinting, reporting, storage, and auditing of juvenile records; more hearings and litigation; more detention from weakened JDTA requirements.

Downstream costs from increased adult-system processing:

Transfer policies are associated with higher violence and reoffending, which means higher costs to law enforcement, courts, victims, and corrections.

Missouri cost context (publicly reported):

Missouri DYS reports FY2023 per-day costs of \$237.93 (community-based), \$194.54 (moderately secure), and \$307.66 (secure care).

Missouri fiscal notes commonly estimate the **full cost of adult incarceration around ~\$99.90/day (~\$36,464/year) (methodology varies by marginal vs. full cost).

Even where a single day of juvenile secure care may cost more than a single day of adult incarceration, the adult system often drives longer confinement, greater recidivism, and higher lifetime costs—and the CDC-reviewed evidence indicates transfer increases violence.

What Missouri should do instead

If the goal is safer communities and fewer victims, evidence supports strategies that reduce youth reoffending without permanently branding young people:

- 1. Keep JDTA mandatory and strengthen—don't weaken—evidence-based detention screening.**
- 2. Limit fingerprinting/data sharing to the narrowest set of truly serious offenses and preserve confidentiality protections.**
- 3. Invest in community-based responses shown to reduce recidivism and stabilize families (behavioral health, credible messenger mentorship, education supports, restorative practices).**
- 4. Require transparent, public reporting on certification decisions and racial disparities (with safeguards), rather than expanding surveillance through MULES.**

In Conclusion

HB 2498 moves Missouri in the wrong direction: more youth in databases, more information flowing through law enforcement systems, weaker evidence-based detention safeguards, more family criminalization, and a higher likelihood of worsening racial disparities—without improving public safety.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to vote NO on HB 2498.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026	
COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KORTNIE HUDDLESTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 11:19 PM	

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

I stand in strong opposition to HB2498 (Christ) and SB888 (Schroer), which represent a dangerous retreat from Missouri's own successful and evidence-based model of juvenile justice.

These bills dismantle the nationally recognized "Missouri Model," which prioritizes rehabilitation over punishment and boasts recidivism rates below 9%. They abandon this proven approach to warehouse children in an adult system where studies show they are 34% more likely to reoffend. This is not justice; it is a recipe for creating more traumatized, system-involved adults.

The bills dangerously shift power from judges and juvenile officers—trained in adolescent development—to prosecutors, accelerating a "punishment-first" pipeline. They will worsen our state's profound racial disparities, where Black youth are already transferred at far higher rates. Further, HB2498 takes the cruel and counterproductive step of criminalizing parents and caregivers who are struggling, threatening them with charges instead of offering support services. This punishes poverty and family stress, undermining the very communities we should be strengthening.

In addition, creating a permanent criminal database for juveniles sabotages rehabilitation and future opportunities. This is not fixing a broken system; it is breaking a successful one.

We do not have a crisis requiring this punitive expansion. The current system already allows for the appropriate handling of serious offenses. This legislation is fiscally irresponsible and morally wrong. I urge you to reject these bills and instead invest in the community-based, restorative interventions that truly keep our youth and our communities safe.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026
COMMITTEE: Children and Families		
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: LESLIE ORTBALS		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 7:05 PM
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026
COMMITTEE: Children and Families		
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: MARY P ADMIRE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 9:23 AM
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026	
COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 11:16 PM	

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

I stand in strong opposition to HB2498 (Christ), which represent a dangerous retreat from Missouri's own successful and evidence-based model of juvenile justice.

These bills dismantle the nationally recognized "Missouri Model," which prioritizes rehabilitation over punishment and boasts recidivism rates below 9%. They abandon this proven approach to warehouse children in an adult system where studies show they are 34% more likely to reoffend. This is not justice; it is a recipe for creating more traumatized, system-involved adults.

The bills dangerously shift power from judges and juvenile officers—trained in adolescent development—to prosecutors, accelerating a "punishment-first" pipeline. They will worsen our state's profound racial disparities, where Black youth are already transferred at far higher rates. Further, HB2498 takes the cruel and counterproductive step of criminalizing parents and caregivers who are struggling, threatening them with charges instead of offering support services. This punishes poverty and family stress, undermining the very communities we should be strengthening.

In addition, creating a permanent criminal database for juveniles sabotages rehabilitation and future opportunities. This is not fixing a broken system; it is breaking a successful one.

We do not have a crisis requiring this punitive expansion. The current system already allows for the appropriate handling of serious offenses. This legislation is fiscally irresponsible and morally wrong. I urge you to reject these bills and instead invest in the community-based, restorative interventions that truly keep our youth and our communities safe.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026
COMMITTEE: Children and Families		
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: ML SMITH		PHONE NUMBER: 314-814-2910
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MOJUSTICE (MISSOURI JUSTICE COALITION)		TITLE: EXEC DIRECTOR
ADDRESS: PO BOX 300563, ST. LOUIS, MO 63130		
CITY: SAINT LOUIS		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 63130
EMAIL: mojusticecoalition@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 8:59 PM

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Pushing teenagers into adult court and prison easier and faster is not the solution to lessening crime or improving public safety. Interestingly enough, Chief Tracy of the St. Louis Police Dept issued year end crime stats for 2025 and noted that crime was down, including auto thefts, and this could be attributed to factors including community and neighborhood services and support.

In addition, juveniles have documented worse outcomes from being placed in adult prisons compared to if they stay in the juvenile detention and supervision systems. Being more punitive only leads to worse outcomes. As a society, we can do better for children who are already likely struggling and traumatized.

I oppose HB2498.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Children and Families		
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: PEACH KELLY		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 9:13 AM
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Do not vote to limit our rights as Missourians.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026
COMMITTEE: Children and Families		
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: RASHEEDA QUARLES		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 11:32 AM
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Kids under the age of 21 do not need to be charged as a adult no matter the situation so I don't not approve



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: REGINA MILLINER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 5:23 PM	
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Do not pass such a horrible bill. Missouri why do you continue to throw children away? Why do you want to sentence child to death without a second chance. Sentencing children as adults shame on you. You know more black and brown children would suffer more. Missouri stop ignoring proving brain science evidence for change. Stop the madness Missouri do better. If it was one of your children, would you want he/she sentenced as an adult?



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH BERRY		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/16/2026 10:52 AM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

I oppose HB 2498.

HB 2498 makes sweeping changes to Missouri’s juvenile justice framework that materially weaken long-standing protections afforded to children. While public safety is a legitimate concern, this bill shifts the system away from rehabilitation and toward permanent criminalization in ways that warrant serious caution.

The bill expands fingerprinting, biometric collection, and data sharing for juveniles, including children under eighteen who have not been certified as adults. Once collected, this information is broadly disseminated through criminal justice systems, increasing the risk that children carry lifelong records for conduct that the juvenile system was designed to address differently.

HB 2498 also accelerates pathways for certifying children as adults and permanently terminates juvenile-court jurisdiction upon conviction, creating irreversible consequences for decisions made while a child is still developing. The bill further introduces criminal liability for parents and enhanced penalties for third parties, shifting responsibility away from systems and onto families in ways that may punish instability rather than prevent harm.

While the bill lists “racial disparity in certification” as a factor for consideration, it offers no substantive safeguards to prevent disparate outcomes. Without enforceable standards, this acknowledgment risks being symbolic rather than protective.

The juvenile justice system exists because children are different. Laws that treat children as permanently culpable rather than developmentally capable of change must be approached with restraint.

HB 2498 moves Missouri away from that principle and toward outcomes that may satisfy immediacy but undermine justice in the long term.

Committee Inquiries Regarding HB 2498

Purpose and Scope

Please explain the specific problem in Missouri’s current juvenile justice system that HB 2498 is intended to correct, and identify the data or findings that support the need for these changes.

Expansion of Biometric Collection

HB 2498 expands fingerprinting, photographing, and biometric data collection for juveniles under eighteen who have not been certified as adults. What safeguards are in place to prevent unnecessary retention, misuse, or long-term harm from this expanded data collection?

Information Sharing and Access

The bill allows juvenile adjudication and detention information to be broadly available to criminal justice agencies through MULES. How does this align with the traditional confidentiality principles of the juvenile justice system?

Due Process in Certification Decisions

Does HB 2498 alter the practical likelihood or speed with which juveniles may be certified as adults, and if so, how are due-process protections preserved given the lifelong consequences of adult prosecution?

Permanent Termination of Juvenile Jurisdiction

The bill provides that juvenile court jurisdiction is “forever terminated” upon conviction in adult court. How does this provision account for adolescent development, rehabilitation potential, and evolving standards in juvenile justice?

Treatment of Acquittals

If a child is transferred to adult court and found not guilty, the bill allows later offenses to be handled again under certification provisions. How does this framework avoid penalizing a child for having been previously charged but acquitted?

Parental Criminal Liability

HB 2498 introduces criminal liability for parents or guardians who allegedly fail to prevent repeat offenses. How does the bill distinguish between willful neglect and circumstances involving poverty, disability, or limited access to services?

Impact on Families and Communities

Has an impact assessment been conducted regarding how expanded parental and third-party criminal liability may affect family stability, particularly in already vulnerable households?

Racial Disparity Safeguards

The bill lists “racial disparity in certification” as a factor for consideration. What enforceable mechanisms exist to ensure this consideration meaningfully reduces disparities rather than merely acknowledging them?

Alignment with Juvenile Justice Principles

How does HB 2498 align with the foundational purpose of the juvenile justice system—to rehabilitate rather than permanently criminalize children—and what measures ensure that this purpose is not undermined by the bill’s provisions?

**In defense of the public interest,
Rev. Sarah M. Berry**



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2498		DATE: 1/20/2026
COMMITTEE: Children and Families		
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: SHARON GEUEA JONES		PHONE NUMBER: 573-808-2156
REPRESENTING: MO STATE CONFERENCE NAACP		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 227 JEFFERSON ST.		
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: sharon@jonesadvocacy.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 5:58 PM

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This bill is a shift away from problem solving and toward stigmatization and punishment without treatment. Young people who are committing crimes should be met with intervention and education not being tagged as a criminal for the rest of their lives.



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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SUSAN GIBSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/16/2026 4:22 PM	
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I am opposed to the practice of certifying children as adults. Children are children and should be considered so in law. A child who breaks a law has missed important parts of their childhood and should have a chance at restoration.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TODD ADMIRE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:54 PM	
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: VICTORIA LYNN HENDERSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 1/19/2026 9:59 AM
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

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COMMITTEE: Children and Families			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: ERIC D. JENNINGS		PHONE NUMBER: 573-526-4726	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: JUDICIAL CONFERENCE OF MISSOURI		TITLE: GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COUNSEL	
ADDRESS: 207 WEST HIGH STREET			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65010
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM	
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JEFFREY BARLOW		PHONE NUMBER: 573-680-6463	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSOCIATION		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 308 E. HIGH STREET, SUITE 105			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: jeff@mjja.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 1/15/2026 5:05 PM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo. To be provided at the hearing verbally and in writing			



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

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COMMITTEE: Children and Families		
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: LISA PANNETT		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: ARMORVINE		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: MATTHEW CROWELL		PHONE NUMBER: 573-465-3011
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI STATE PUBLIC DEFENDER		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 1000 W. NIFONG BUILDING 7		
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65203
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/20/2026 12:00 AM
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