



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2610		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	
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I am in Support of this Bill and paying for Claims made by the Foster Care Entity of Agency from the State Legal Expense Fund.



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: DAVID WINTON		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: FAMILY FORWARD		TITLE:
ADDRESS: PO BOX 1805		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65102
EMAIL: david@wintonpolicygroup.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/10/2026 8:41 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: DOUG NELSON		PHONE NUMBER: 573-690-7209	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, CLARKSTON AND NELSON		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 235 E. HIGH ST, STE 301			
CITY: JC		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/10/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JUSTIN HORTON		PHONE NUMBER: 816-617-1372	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: CORNERSTONES OF CARE		TITLE: CHIEF PROGRAMS & INNOVATION OFFICER	
ADDRESS: 8150 WORNALL ROAD			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64114
EMAIL: justin.horton@cornerstonesofcare.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2026 12:02 PM
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 2610, legislation that strengthens and clarifies the protections offered under Missouri’s State Legal Expense Fund.

HB 2610 provides an important and much needed update by extending coverage to entities and individuals who provide foster care case management or residential services under Chapter 210. These providers play an essential role in safeguarding the well being of Missouri’s children and families. They operate in complex, high risk environments where decisions must be made quickly, compassionately, and in accordance with state requirements.

By ensuring that contracted and subcontracted child welfare agencies—as well as their staff, officers, and members—are eligible for protection under the State Legal Expense Fund when acting within the scope of their duties, HB 2610 provides three critical benefits:

1. **Greater Stability for the Child Welfare System**
 Contracted foster care and residential providers are integral to Missouri’s continuum of care. Extending legal expense coverage promotes operational stability and reduces financial vulnerability that could otherwise weaken service capacity.
2. **Fairness and Parity Across Providers**
 Many professionals and entities working on behalf of the state already receive coverage under the fund. HB 2610 brings parity by ensuring that contracted child welfare agencies performing state-directed responsibilities have access to the same protections.
3. **Support for Workforce Recruitment and Retention**
 Child welfare professionals face emotionally and legally challenging circumstances every day. Providing legal expense protection reinforces that the state stands behind the individuals who carry out these difficult duties—helping attract and retain qualified staff in a field already under strain.

HB 2610 is a common-sense measure that aligns policy with practice. By recognizing the essential role of contracted foster care and residential service providers and extending appropriate legal protections, this bill ultimately supports safer, more consistent, and more reliable services for Missouri’s children and families.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of HB 2610.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to Missouri’s child welfare

system.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: MARY CHANT		PHONE NUMBER: 573-303-6765	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI COALITION FOR CHILDREN		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 213 E. CAPITOL AVE			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/10/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL HENDERSON		PHONE NUMBER: 573-520-7240
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 235 E HIGH ST, STE 301		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: mike@cnmissouri.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/9/2026 2:09 PM

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Missouri Alliance for Children & Families (MACF) supports HB 2610.



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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 1:53 PM	

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House Bill 2610 materially expands the scope, reach, and insulation of the State Legal Expense Fund in a way that undermines accountability, weakens civil remedies, and shifts the financial consequences of misconduct away from responsible actors and onto Missouri taxpayers.

This bill is not about efficiency. It is about risk transfer — transferring legal exposure from individuals, contractors, and entities performing state functions to the public treasury, while simultaneously restricting the ability of injured parties to obtain meaningful relief.

HB 2610 dramatically broadens who may be indemnified by the State Legal Expense Fund, including contractors, subcontractors, foster care entities, medical professionals, nonprofit service providers, and agents acting under color of state authority. These are not merely state employees acting under direct supervision. They are third-party actors operating with discretion, contractual independence, and real power over vulnerable populations. Expanding blanket indemnification to these groups dilutes responsibility and incentivizes risk-taking without consequence.

The bill entrenches the State Legal Expense Fund as the exclusive remedy for claims arising from official conduct, precluding parallel civil actions and insulating individuals from personal liability even where constitutional rights are violated. This structure collides directly with long-established federal law recognizing that state indemnification schemes may not obstruct civil rights enforcement or suppress remedies guaranteed under federal statute.

Of particular concern is the interaction between this bill and claims arising under federal civil rights law. States may not legislate around liability under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, nor may they immunize actors from accountability when constitutional violations occur under color of law. Any attempt to funnel such claims into a state-controlled fund, limit damages, or restrict avenues of relief invites federal preemption and inevitable litigation.

HB 2610 also creates profound due process concerns. By centralizing payment authority in the executive branch and conditioning payments on approval of the attorney general, the bill places the same office responsible for defending claims in a position of gatekeeping compensation. This structural conflict undermines neutrality and erodes public trust in the fairness of claims resolution.

The financial implications are equally troubling. By expanding indemnification while preserving damage caps and shielding personal liability, the bill guarantees increased payouts from the State Legal Expense Fund without corresponding deterrence. When misconduct carries no personal or

professional consequence, it repeats. Taxpayers absorb the cost, while systemic failures persist.

Finally, the bill's nonseverability clause is not a safeguard — it is an admission of fragility. It attempts to strong-arm courts by threatening total collapse if any portion is found unconstitutional. Courts routinely reject such tactics. The result will not be preservation of the statute, but wholesale invalidation after costly litigation.

Missouri does not need broader shields for state-adjacent actors. It needs clearer standards, stronger oversight, and accountability mechanisms that prevent harm before claims arise. HB 2610 moves in the opposite direction.

This bill should not advance.

Legal & Constitutional Footnotes

Missouri Constitution, Article I, Section 14 — open courts and remedy by due course of law

Missouri Constitution, Article I, Section 2 — due process

Missouri Constitution, Article III, Section 38(a) — prohibition on gifts of public funds

U.S. Constitution, Amendment XIV — due process and equal protection

42 U.S.C. § 1983 — civil liability for deprivation of rights

Monell v. Department of Social Services

Owen v. City of Independence

Howlett v. Rose

Missouri Revised Statutes §§ 537.600–537.610 — sovereign immunity and limits

Missouri Revised Statutes §§ 105.711–105.726 — State Legal Expense Fund

Missouri Revised Statutes Chapter 536 — rulemaking and separation of powers



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JEREMIAH MORGAN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-291-1483	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI ATTORNEY GENERAL's OFFICE		TITLE: DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL	
ADDRESS: 207 WEST HIGH STREET			
CITY: JEFFERSON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64151
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/10/2026 12:00 AM	
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