



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2682		DATE: 1/21/2026	
COMMITTEE: General Laws			
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. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: BYRON KEELIN		PHONE NUMBER: 314-402-0655	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: FREEDOM PRINCIPLE MO		TITLE: PRESIDENT	
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CITY: BALLWIN		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63022
EMAIL: freedomprinciplemo@protonmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 7:27 PM	

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

We are writing in strong support of Missouri House Bill 2682, the "Safeguarding Personal Expression at K-12 Schools (SPEAKS) Act." This essential legislation upholds the foundational rights of students to express religious, political, and ideological beliefs free from discrimination within Missouri's public schools. By affirming that students' voices—whether expressed in homework, clothing, voluntary clubs, or public forums—are to be treated with the same respect and neutrality as secular viewpoints, this bill takes an important step in ensuring an inclusive and constitutionally sound educational environment.

This bill's clear prohibition against school districts discriminating based on religious, political, or ideological expressions fortifies protections for all students. It guarantees students the ability to form clubs, participate in meetings, and display personal beliefs openly and safely. Additionally, by mandating that school assignments are evaluated solely on academic merit rather than personal belief, HB 2682 safeguards the educational process against bias or favoritism.

Importantly, HB 2682 provides necessary checks to ensure these freedoms are balanced with school order and safety. It explicitly prohibits disruptive behaviors, unprotected forms of speech, and harassment, ensuring that student expression cannot infringe upon the rights of others or the smooth operation of the school. The bill's provision for a private cause of action further empowers students and organizations to seek redress in the event of violations, underscoring the seriousness of these protections.

In sum, HB 2682 establishes a fair and robust framework that champions the First Amendment for Missouri students while providing schools with tools to maintain a respectful and disciplined environment. It is an important, thoughtfully crafted bill that deserves the full support of the legislature. I urge its passage to ensure the constitutional rights and dignity of all students are preserved in our public schools.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: CAMELLIA PETERSON		PHONE NUMBER: 417-726-9475	
REPRESENTING: AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 94			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: DOUG RICHEY		PHONE NUMBER: 623-220-6550	
REPRESENTING: ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM ACTION		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 15100 N. 90TH ST.			
CITY: SCOTTSDALE		STATE: AZ	ZIP: 85260
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: LANCE KINZER		PHONE NUMBER: 202-682-1201	
REPRESENTING: 1ST AMENDMENT PARTNERSHIP		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 1720 M STREET NW, SUITE 909			
CITY: WASHINGTON		STATE: DC	ZIP: 20036
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: WALTER E HAYES		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 1/17/2026 2:58 PM

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I'm writing in strong support of HB 2682. This bill rightly expands protections for students' religious, political, and ideological expressions, ensuring viewpoint neutrality in public schools. By prohibiting discrimination against student clubs based on their beliefs or membership requirements, it upholds First Amendment principles and fosters a diverse, tolerant educational environment. I appreciate how the bill maintains schools' authority to restrict unprotected speech, offensive content that denies equal access to education, or disruptive conduct. However, I have a concern: who defines "offensive"? We've seen nationwide instances where items like MAGA hats or Charlie Kirk t-shirts were labeled offensive or made people feel "unsafe", potentially allowing educators with opposing views to stifle conservative or contrary perspectives. To prevent abuse, the bill's enforcement should strictly adhere to objective First Amendment standards, avoiding subjective interpretations that could undermine its intent. Critics may claim it enables exclusionary groups, but it balances free speech with necessary limits, promoting true inclusivity. Passing HB 2682 would affirm Missouri's commitment to liberty and robust discourse. I urge you to advance this bill.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL DREYER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
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CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 9:50 PM	

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I am in strong opposition to HB2682 (Chappell), the so-called "SPEAKS Act." While presented as a shield for personal expression, these bills are a dangerous weapon that will be used to harm our most vulnerable students at K-12 schools. By elevating "political and ideological expression" to the same protected status as religious expression, this legislation creates a license for discrimination under the guise of free speech.

It explicitly protects clubs that require members to adhere to specific beliefs, allowing groups to formally exclude LGBTQIA+ students, students of color, and others based on "sincerely held" ideologies. A club could ban LGBTQIA+ members or promote racist ideologies, and the school's hands would be tied. This sanctions bullying and exclusion with legal protection, forcing targeted students into hostile environments.

In addition, the bill's private cause of action and financial penalties will intimidate schools from intervening to protect students from harassment, for fear of costly lawsuits. This does not promote liberty; it empowers bullies and national hate groups to institutionalize discrimination in our schools.

Our schools must be safe, inclusive learning environments for every child. HB2682 undermines that fundamental duty. I urge you to reject these bills and protect all Missouri students.



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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: OTTO FAJEN		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-3202	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI NEA		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 1810 E. ELM ST.			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
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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: 1/19/2026 10:36 AM	

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I oppose HB 2682 because, while framed as a student free-expression protection, it substantially expands litigation risk, undermines classroom governance, and imposes unfunded and unworkable mandates on public schools without clear constitutional necessity.

First, students already possess robust First Amendment protections under existing federal law.

Courts have long held that students may express religious and political viewpoints so long as such expression does not materially disrupt the educational environment.

HB 2682 goes far beyond safeguarding those rights by codifying vague, subjective standards that force schools to navigate political, ideological, and religious disputes without clear enforcement boundaries.

Second, the bill creates extraordinary liability exposure for school districts.

It authorizes private causes of action, waives sovereign immunity, mandates minimum monetary damages, and treats each day a policy remains in place as a new violation.

This structure invites constant litigation, even when schools act in good faith to maintain order, safety, and instructional neutrality. Small and rural districts—already resource-constrained—will bear disproportionate harm.

Third, HB 2682 blurs the line between student expression and institutional responsibility.

Despite disclaimers, schools will still be placed in the position of policing ideological speech at school-sponsored events, including graduations, assemblies, and classrooms.

This creates conflicting legal duties: protect expression on one hand, while preventing harassment, disruption, or coercion on the other.

Educators and administrators are not trained constitutional litigators, yet this bill effectively requires them to become so.

Fourth, the bill weakens classroom standards and instructional integrity by limiting educators' discretion to evaluate student work when political or ideological content is present.

Academic rigor depends on clear pedagogical judgment, not fear of lawsuits.

This legislation risks chilling educators' ability to maintain neutral, standards-based instruction.

Finally, if the General Assembly's true concern is protecting students, the focus should be on clearer professional standards, consistent disciplinary frameworks, and stronger due-process protections, not on expanding causes of action that convert classrooms into legal battlegrounds.

Public schools exist to educate—not to litigate ideology.

HB 2682 destabilizes that mission and exposes districts, teachers, and students to unnecessary conflict and cost.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to oppose HB 2682.

I trust this will be reviewed with the seriousness it warrants,

Rev. Sarah M. Berry



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: SHARON GEUEA JONES		PHONE NUMBER: 573-808-2156
REPRESENTING: PROMO / MO STATE CONF NAACP		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY: JC	STATE: MO	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JERE HOCHMAN		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
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"You can't legislate what matters!"

This bill appears to attempt further define what language is and is not acceptable, prescriptions for handling, and allowing law suits. HAVE YOU CONSIDERED PLAN B? Trust students. Trust parents. Trust teachers, counselors, and administrators. From toddlers to HS seniors, they set standards and what is acceptable. They set norms. Right and wrong. Acceptable and hurtful.

The problem is - The MO Legislature has removed dialogue, teaching what is acceptable through stories and history and recess play, teaching "lessons" when students misbehave. The obsession with diversity and inclusion has everyone walking on eggshells instead of making every action a learning experience.

The hearing on Antisemitic statements was a perfect example. Back and forth, sorting it out, telling one's story, disagreeing but listening, raising everyone's awareness for several hours. It works with kids, too!



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WITNESS NAME			
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WITNESS NAME: SARA BETH NOLAN		PHONE NUMBER: 678-823-0758	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM		TITLE: LEGAL COUNSEL	
ADDRESS: 15100 N. 90TH ST.			
CITY: SCOTTSDALE		STATE: AZ	ZIP: 85260
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 1/21/2026 12:00 AM	
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