



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 2614		DATE: 3/23/2022	
COMMITTEE: Judiciary			
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 DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVOCATE		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/23/2022 11:58 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			
We NEED to Help Out Homeless!			



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JUDGE GLOCK		PHONE NUMBER: 703-509-4191	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: CICERO ACTION		TITLE: DIRECTOR OF POLICY	
ADDRESS: 1213 FIELDCREST DRIVE			
CITY: AUSTIN		STATE: TX	ZIP: 78705
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 3/23/2022 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: BELLE DELACRUZ		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: bellevdelacruz@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2022 12:26 PM
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This bill criminalized homelessness and takes away funding for construction of permanent housing. This shows that the priority is for law enforcement and data collection rather than fixing the problem of homelessness. Additionally, this bill is requiring that organizations that work with homeless populations provide additional services such as: mental health and substance abuse, which in actuality will limit the number of service organizations. Many housing organizations do not have the capacity to provide these services.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: CHESSA DIXON		PHONE NUMBER: 660-827-0560	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: PETTIS COUNTY COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP, INC.		TITLE: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING	
ADDRESS: 1400 S. LIMIT, STE 29			
CITY: SEDALIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65301
EMAIL: chessa@pcmcpartners.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/14/2022 11:01 AM

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The specific pieces of the proposed bill that I am opposed to are listed below. This act states that no one will be permitted to use state-owned lands for unauthorized sleeping or long-term shelters. Any violation will be a class C misdemeanor. No homelessness assistance funding will be given to any nonprofit in a city that shows an increase of 50 unsheltered homeless individuals for two years and refuses to enforce unauthorized camping. No state funds will be allocated to any nonprofit for the construction of short-term housing that costs more than \$55,000 per bed to build or costs more than \$20,000 a year to maintain at a basic level. A nonprofit may use 10% of state grants for permanent housing to support enforcement of unauthorized sleeping and data collection. As a housing service provider, we see that homelessness is a multifaceted, complex issue. We need support from the community and must take a holistic approach to assist those that are unhoused. Punishments to the service providers, cities, communities, and those unhoused, are in no way beneficial to ending homelessness.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: JEREMY LAFAVER		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: EMPOWER MISSOURI		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 7200 MADISON			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64114
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 3/23/2022 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KELLY WINCHESTER		PHONE NUMBER: 314-403-0210	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: FINDING GRACE MINISTRIES		TITLE: EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	
ADDRESS: 3921 JEFFCO BLVD			
CITY: ARNOLD		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63010
EMAIL: kelly@findinggraceministries.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/22/2022 10:26 AM

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As a social service agency, directly working with the homeless population, it is distressing to hear of legislation that further vilifies the plight of the homeless. I am not sure what the spirit of this law addresses, but it is not kindness or care of our most vulnerable citizens. Those of us working in service of the homeless need the legislation of our great state to work with us, not against us. Agencies like Finding Grace Ministries rely on grant funds to assist devastated and traumatized victims every day. The money we receive from grant funding is not used for material comforts and luxuries, it is used for basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. In most cases grants allow a maximum of 10% to go toward the administrative costs of operation. A reduction of funds either impacts the care available to our most needy, or the ability to afford our people serving them. I do not see the benefit to penalizing service organizations, because they have an increase in homeless people to serve. I do not understand the rationality of penalizing service organizations for not enforcing unauthorized camping. How exactly does the State expect Finding Grace Ministries to perform the "enforcement" of this rule? It is my understanding that a class C misdemeanor carries a penalty of up to 15 days in jail and up to a \$750 fine. We are proposing to penalize our most desperate citizens, for seeking the safety and protection of state property when their alternative is what? Imposing this penalty will be discovered on background checks that will affect a persons ability to obtain a job and permanent housing. There are NO homeless shelters, at all, in Jefferson County. Finding Grace Ministries is currently in the process of building one, but that shelter, at capacity will only 32 people at a given time, many of them children and survivors of domestic abuse. We are a very small agency working toward solutions for homelessness, The proposed legislation appears to give US more barriers and penalties, not solutions. I would hope that our legislators would be focusing their attention and efforts toward positive impact to our citizens, most in need, of compassion and service - not in penalizing the already traumatized, and the well-meaning organizations putting their efforts in restorative service.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: MCCLAIN BRYANT MACKLIN		PHONE NUMBER:	
REPRESENTING: HEALTH FORWARD FOUNDATION		TITLE: DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES	
ADDRESS:			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 64108
EMAIL: mbryantmacklin@healthforward.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/23/2022 1:36 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

March 23, 2022 House Judiciary Committee Missouri State Capitol 201 W. Capitol Ave. Jefferson City, MO 65101
Re: Opposition to HB 2614 on funding for housing programs for homeless Missourians
Chair and members of the committee: On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter of testimony in opposition to HB 2614, pertaining to requirements for funding for housing programs for unhoused Missourians. This legislation works against regional efforts to advance safe, healthy, and affordable housing by creating significant barriers for organizations working to solve this issue with our communities. Missouri already has a higher rate of people without housing than our neighboring states. Missouri's 10.6 people per 10,000 compares to an average of 9.3 people in our eight neighboring states. (See Data is from 2020 based on U.S. Census data compiled by the National Alliance to End Homelessness). This legislation would create onerous costs and barriers to organizations providing basic needs. Additionally, the limits on tenancy would not allow people adequate time to secure transitional housing that sets them up for long term success. Additionally, this legislation would work against our shared goals of improving health care access and positive health outcomes for all Missourians. People without housing suffer from higher rates of disease, such as diabetes, poor heart health, and mental illness than those who are housed. (See National Health Care for the Homeless Council. Homelessness & Health: What's the Connection? February 2019). Restricting access and duration for unhoused people to find stable footing adds further strain to Missouri's already spread-thin health care system. HB 2614 would widen existing injustices for communities of color. People of color in the U.S. lack a place to live at double to almost 10 times the rate of their white counterparts. By restricting access to short-term housing alternatives, this bill would most adversely affect communities already hardest hit by not having a safe, healthy, and affordable living environment. Health Forward urges a more considered approach to helping those without a home. HB 2614, as currently written, would further constrain the ability for those serving unhoused Missourians to do their job. Additionally, it would add even more uncertainty to those already experiencing the extreme difficulties posed by not having a consistent and safe place to live. As such, we stand in opposition to this legislation. Please contact me at mbryantmacklin@healthforward.org if you would like additional information on this issue. Respectfully, McClain Bryant Macklin
Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives
Health Forward Foundation



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MICAH TITTERINGTON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: micaht@bolivarcom.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/14/2022 11:32 AM
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As the Executive Director of a nonprofit that works every day with low-income individuals and individuals experiencing homelessness, I cannot support this proposed bill in its current form. In particular, I take issue with the criminalization of homelessness through the inclusion of a Class C misdemeanor. By now, we should all know that making a behavior a criminal act does little to stop the behavior or fix the problem. In the case of someone experiencing homelessness, they do not have money to pay a fine and jail time will only create another obstacle to stability by adding a blight on their criminal record. This will especially be a problem for rural areas such as where I serve. In countless communities throughout the state, there are no homeless shelters, either long-term or short-term. In my county, we have no real places for people to stay unless they are lucky enough to get accepted into a shelter 40 minutes away and willing to go. Without local shelters or overnight options, the only choice many people have is to camp out in public lands as most businesses do not want anyone on their property overnight. Unless additional support (both logistical and monetary) is given to small, rural communities for creating shelters and solutions, you just create a stick without a carrot (which is just abusive). Rather than penalizing someone for something they do not have (a home), our community's and law enforcement efforts would be better spent working to address the roots of why people feel a need to camp out in the first place. Encouraging cities and counties to build better infrastructure to address substance abuse, social isolation, and mental health would be great starting places. Throwing people in jail or fining them in communities where no alternatives exist is just bad policy.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: PATIRICA		PHONE NUMBER: 417-991-3606	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: PROJECT 360 YOUTH SERVICES		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 741			
CITY: LEBANON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65536
EMAIL: director@p360youth.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2022 2:32 PM

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You cannot take the un-Christian approach that the homeless cannot live anywhere and organizations will not be supported if they try to house the homeless....in any form. Shame on you.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: PATRICIA BRAYFIELD		PHONE NUMBER: 573-340-3302	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: ELEVATE LEBANON		TITLE: PRESIDENT-BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 776			
CITY: LEBANON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65536
EMAIL: Patti.Brayfield@ElevateLebanon.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2022 2:29 PM
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We are struggling to get these people off the street. You now want to make it impossible to give them any assistance to survive and possibly stand alone again



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: PATTI		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: patti.brayfield@gmail.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 3/11/2022 2:34 PM

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You cannot forbid the homeless from living outside and then punish non profit organizations who are trying to get them sheltered. I strongly oppose this bill!



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH OWSLEY		PHONE NUMBER: 816-506-3513	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: EMPOWER MISSOURI		TITLE: POLICY AND ADVOCACY DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 308 E HIGH ST #100			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: sarah@empowermissouri.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 3/23/2022 4:55 PM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

Empower Missouri convenes a statewide coalition supporting the advancement of evidence based public policy to increase the availability of affordable housing and support our neighbors with housing needs. We join the bill sponsor in recognizing street homelessness as an untenable and unacceptable status for our neighbors in poverty. However, we are in opposition to HB 2614 and respectfully request you to vote 'no' on this bill. Every year, HUD requires homeless service providers to count every person they can locate who is experiencing homelessness (Point in Time or PIT). While 2022 numbers are being finalized, preliminary data show significant increase from 2021, however the count for that year was artificially low because of the COVID-19 pandemic (communities experienced a lack of volunteers, difficulty organizing the statewide count, and more issues). The 2020 count was completed before the pandemic hit our state, and Missouri had 6,534 community members at that time who are considered homeless. Of those, 453 are veterans, 2,011 were families with children, 664 were unaccompanied youth and 439 were parenting youth. It is important to note that for HUD, a person is considered a youth if they are 24 or under, so not all of these parents are teenagers. The 2020 count was completed on a frigid cold night, it was negative degrees outside in many parts of our state. 1,648 community members were sleeping unsheltered that night, even while the state rallied to send volunteers to all parts of our state. There were not shelter beds available to these individuals. Bills aimed at decreasing homelessness often focus on the pervasive issue of what HUD calls 'chronic homelessness.' These neighbors have been homeless for more than one full year or have experienced four separate bouts of homelessness. 1,092 of our neighbors in Missouri meet this very stringent criteria. Our housing providers across the state maintain a database of these individuals so they can move them into a more permanent housing solution as quickly as possible. These folks often still wait months or years. We can consider the 2021 Housing Inventory Count to be rather complete, because it was simply reporting from HUD funded agencies (and agencies providing shelter which may not be HUD funded). For the over 6,000 individuals experiencing homelessness, there were only 3,860 emergency shelter beds in the state. Only 97 of those beds were dedicated to veterans, 128 to youth. To truly begin to eradicate homelessness, we have to look toward addressing the systemic issues that land people in housing insecurity to start with. The most obvious of these issues is the cost of housing. Using a calculation where one should spend just 30% of their income on housing and utility costs, there is no county in our state where a full time worker making minimum wage can afford to house themselves. Instead, 71% of the households in our state who earn under 35,000 a year pay more than 30% to housing alone, and nearly 20% of those households pay 50% of their income to housing costs. Those households who have located affordable housing usually do so with the assistance of a housing voucher, only 1 in 5 households in Missouri who qualify for and need that housing assistance

are able to get it. This leaves very little family resources for emergencies, health issues, or to form a savings nest egg. This bill would divert limited funds away from programs designed to help fill this gap by building new transitional and supportive housing options, which will further decrease affordable housing units, increasing the problem of homelessness. People experiencing homelessness often interact with law enforcement. Increased penalization of homelessness is an already proven failed policy which increases state funding in court and jail costs. Individuals who are homeless do not have resources to pay court costs or fines, which means individuals who are charged with a misdemeanor for sleeping outside under this bill will likely end up incarcerated simply for being poor. Individuals with criminal records then struggle to access better paying employment or safe housing, and the cycle of poverty worsens. We would like to explore ways to reduce the costs of construction and maintenance for both shelter and housing units. However a flat cap like in this bill will not effectively lower those costs. In fact, rehabbing units is significantly more cost effective than new construction, and directing resources to the Missouri Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which is woefully underfunded, with instructions to support rehabilitation is a common sense policy which will lower the homelessness rate over time. Redirecting resources away from the solutions to homelessness creates a mutually conflicting problem. Fewer resources means homelessness will increase, even if it increases in nearby communities instead of the lower resourced community of origin. Empower Missouri and the Affordable Housing Coalition respectfully ask that you vote 'no' on HB 2614. We are available to answer questions and explore ideas, as well as connect any lawmakers to the wonderful not for profit agencies working to end homelessness across our state.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH ROBISON		PHONE NUMBER: 618-340-8494	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: CALLAWAY CARES		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: 5045 RED MAPLE LN.			
CITY: FULTON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65251
EMAIL: sarahcares@outlook.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/21/2022 7:46 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

My name is Sarah Robison and I am speaking on behalf of Callaway Cares non-profit Street Outreach Team. Thank you for taking the time to hear perspectives from the community, we appreciate the opportunity to speak into the legislative process and share our experiences with you. I am speaking to you today in regards to the Missouri House Bill HB2614 – Funding for Housing Programs. I am sharing with you today to express my position against this legislation. Section 67.2300.1 will affect my community in that it is a proven fact that the mental health and substance abuse programs are sadly lacking in support and follow-through. People with mental health and/or substance abuse problems are often treated as subhuman and have been labeled as the lowest of the low before they even get the evaluations. I think the evaluations are a good thing IF there is actual help for the individuals being evaluated. If this evaluation is going to be used to just toss them back out into the streets as lost causes, they are NOT helping. I have watched homeless brothers and sisters cry in humiliation after being treated as though they are not worth helping. We need programs that will truly benefit those who NEED the help. Section 67.2300.3 will affect my organization in that tracking and violating homeless people's privacy is not something that should be mandated and puts our organization at odds with the people we are trying to help. Because of the stigma that homeless people face, they are extremely hesitant to share those details in fear of being rejected or turned away from any help. Combine that with the fact that more and more people are finding themselves homeless due to the last TWO YEARS of economic chaos and job losses, and we have a housing CRISIS on our hands. We should just be helping these people get shelter. Why does a hospital stay in the last year even matter? Section 67.2300.4 will affect my community in that this will greatly limit the places that our homeless population can exist. This is bad on so many levels. Taking away their ability to camp on government land will ensure trespassing onto private property or other places where they are not welcome. What do you expect these people to do? Do you realize that there are CHILDREN in these homeless camps? There are young mothers and elderly. There are VETERANS of our country! What do you want them to do? I can't help but imagine that those who are trying to pass this legislation have NEVER experienced any kind of hardship or lack of housing or resources. This section, in particular is just cruel and a testament to the heartlessness of our political leaders. These are human beings, not vermin to be eradicated. Section 67.2300.5 will affect my community/organization in that our work is primarily helping to help and house the homeless. Due to the severe economic hardship we have experienced, and the rising costs of EVERYTHING, more and more people are finding themselves unable to make ends meet and so many families are losing their livelihoods and their homes! Wages are NOT enough to sustain working families with housing, food, travel expense and all the costs of just basic necessities. And now you want to take away the little bit of help that organizations like ours can provide? We are ALL struggling to get our lives back after the last two years of COVID-19. Even those

of us that still have a roof over our heads...but just barely. This legislation is going to ENSURE many more homeless people rather than helping to prevent homelessness. It is simply inhumane. Section 67.2300.7 will affect my organization/community/self in that this is probably the most diabolical section to the entire bill. This will basically force our homeless community into desperation. This bill will take away any and all safe areas for homeless people to survive. This will lead to ACTS of desperation as these people will be forced to trespass, steal food and needed items for survival and eventually end up exacerbating the whole cycle. I really want to know, where do you expect them to go? You are attempting to take away even the smallest amount of dignity these people have left. It's inhumane and cruel. There are empty buildings, abandoned homes and so many places that could be made into homeless shelters or education buildings to help them get jobs etc. Then you have organizations like ours who are out here in the streets with them and doing what we can to help. We SEE the dirt that you don't. We speak to and sit with the human beings that you are trying to dispose of. We watch them try in vain to put one foot in front of another and are constantly hitting roadblock after roadblock just to get a hot meal. You are attempting to make their lives SO much more difficult. What if it were you? What if it were your son, your daughter? Would you agree with this bill then? Please, help us to help them. Don't pass this bill that will just make their lives so much harder. These are our brothers and sisters. They deserve our help and our compassion. They deserve the representation that everyone else has. My family (my husband, two sons and myself) found ourselves in a VERY precarious situation. We were on the razor's edge of being homeless. We are good, hard-working people and all it took was one decision of a supposed friend of ours that sent us out into the cold with no where to go. Luckily, the very organization that I am now helping with, Callaway Cares, stepped in to help get us housing so that we didn't end up homeless. We have helped SO many families keep their homes and have helped homeless people on their way to bettering their lives as well. Do NOT take away this resource. So many people...GOOD PEOPLE...depend on it for help. I plead with you...Say NO to this bill. Thank you for taking the time to listen to the perspective of myself on behalf of Callaway Cares. I hope that this testimony will give insight to the impact that this act will have on the state of Missouri. I declare that the above statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge. Sincerely, Sarah Robison Callaway Cares Street Outreach Coordinator



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: SARAH ROBISON		PHONE NUMBER: 618-340-8494	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: CALLAWAY CARES		TITLE: CALLAWAY CARES STREET OUTREACH COORDINATOR	
ADDRESS: 5045 RED MAPLE LN.			
CITY: FULTON		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65251
EMAIL: sarahcares@outlook.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 3/21/2022 7:11 PM
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My name is Sarah Robison and I am speaking on behalf of Callaway Cares non-profit organization in Callaway County, MO. Thank you for taking the time to hear perspectives from the community, we appreciate the opportunity to speak into the legislative process and share our experiences with you. I am speaking to you today in regards to the Missouri House Bill HB2614 – Funding for Housing Programs. I am sharing with you today to express my position AGAINST this legislation.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: JENNIFER CARTER DOCHLER		PHONE NUMBER: 573-356-4109	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE (MOCADSV)		TITLE: PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 217 OSCAR DR., STE. A			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: jennc@mocadsv.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 3/21/2022 4:17 PM

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MOCADSV worked with Cicero Action to include language that would exclude domestic violence shelters. As long as this language is included in a committee substitute, we will remain neutral. The language is: No part of this act, including references to the disbursement of state grants or funds, shall apply to shelters for victims of domestic violence as defined in 455.200.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: JILLIAN BARNAS		PHONE NUMBER: 815-274-9225	
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This testimony is a summary of three Science Notes published on our website which can be accessed at: <https://mostpolicyinitiative.org/science-note/homelessnessinmissouri/> <https://mostpolicyinitiative.org/science-note/male-homelessness/> <https://mostpolicyinitiative.org/science-note/veteran-homelessness/> Homelessness is a multifaceted issue that affects over a half-million Americans on a single night in the US and is associated with adverse social, health, and economic outcomes. Homeless individuals or families lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those who live in a shelter designated for momentary housing (sheltered) or in places not designated as proper housing (unsheltered). While any individual can experience homelessness, it is commonly reported that the homeless population mostly consists of single males. However, social disparities, such as race, in homelessness are much greater in certain geographical areas (i.e., St. Louis) and have not improved in recent years. Between 2014-2018, Missouri homelessness has decreased by 18%. Between 2018 and 2020, the number of individuals experiencing homelessness increased by approximately 11% to a total of 6,527 individuals. Therefore, there was a slight increase in homelessness in advance of the COVID-19 pandemic (specifically for youth and chronic homelessness). This might suggest that shelters were overburdened/under-resourced to respond to changes with the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it appears that COVID-19 disrupted point-in-time counts for 2021. The United States Housing and Urban Development Homelessness report only has sheltered homelessness counts and does not account for those individuals unsheltered. Depending on Missouri Continuum of Care COVID-19 mitigation strategies, point-in-time numbers may underrepresent the number of individuals experiencing homelessness. Therefore, 2021 point-in-time data may need to be interpreted cautiously.

General Highlights--Mental health and substance abuse disorders affect 20% of Missourians experiencing homelessness. --There is a link between homelessness and incarceration; homeless individuals are more likely to be repeat offenders for low-level offenses. --Service programs that emphasize housing and employment have the potential to reduce homelessness and break the homelessness-jail cycle while reducing taxpayer burdens for associated services such as emergency room visits. Limitations -- Existing data provides a snapshot of people experiencing homelessness and does not capture everybody who experienced homelessness over the course of a year. --These data were collected in January 2020, the coldest time of the year, to be a conservative estimate of those who are homeless with no other housing options. --These data were collected before COVID-19 was declared a national public health emergency. The data presented does not reflect potential housing changes caused by the pandemic.