

HCS HB 1359 -- EARLY PAROLE OF GERIATRIC INMATES

SPONSOR: Hannegan

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions by a vote of 9 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules- Legislative Oversight Committee by a vote of 11 to 1.

This bill specifies that any incarcerated offender 70 years of age or older who has no prior felony convictions of a violent nature, who is not a convicted sexual offender, and who is serving a sentence of life without parole for a minimum of 50 years or more must receive a parole hearing upon serving 30 years or more of his or her sentence.

The Board of Probation and Parole within the Department of Corrections must determine whether there is a reasonable probability that the offender will not violate the law upon release and therefore is eligible for release based upon a finding that the offender meets specified criteria.

This bill is similar to HB 726 (2017).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this does not grant people release; this just states that they shall be eligible for a hearing. It also does not include all inmates over the age of 65, as it does exclude certain inmates from eligibility. Passing this legislation would save the state over \$1 million per year, as it is expensive to house and care for elderly, sick inmates.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hannegan; Shannon Norman; Judy Henderson; John Scott, St. Louis University Law School and Clinic; John Ammann, Saint Louis University; Donte' Tamprateep, St. Louis Law Legal Clinic; Families Against Mandatory Minimums; Empower Missouri; Michael Barrett; Missouri Catholic Conference; and ACLU of Missouri.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that a sentence of life without eligibility for parole should be just that. This would diminish the loss of life of the victim(s) and the severity of the offense.

Testifying against the bill was Amy Fite, Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.