



Missouri House of Representatives

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Missouri House Passes HB 1777 to Enhance Rights and Support for Offenders

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri House has signed off on legislation that would enhance the rights and support for offenders in the Show-Me State. HB 1777, sponsored by Representative Chad Perkins, represents a significant advancement in both criminal justice reform and social welfare.

HB 1777 encompasses various modifications concerning certain aspects related to offenders, SNAP benefits, juvenile court proceedings, inmate release, treatment of pregnant offenders, admissibility of evidence in criminal cases, and good time credit for offenders committed to the Department of Corrections. Here's a breakdown of the key provisions:

- **Access to SNAP Benefits:** This bill removes restrictions on individuals convicted of state or federal felony drug offenses from participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Previously, certain conditions needed to be met for them to access SNAP benefits.
- **Restraints on Children in Juvenile Court:** The bill prohibits the use of restraints on children during juvenile court proceedings, unless certain exceptions apply. It requires the removal of restraints before the child appears before the court, except in cases of immediate safety or flight risk. The court must make findings of fact if restraints are ordered.
- **Inmate Release from Corrections:** The Department of Corrections is required to provide relevant documentation to assist certain inmates in obtaining post-release employment. It also mandates the provision of State-issued identification cards to inmates without current ones, with coordination between the Department of Corrections and the Department of Revenue. Procedures for obtaining these documents are outlined, and funding sources for ID cards are specified.
- **Treatment of Pregnant Offenders:** County and city jails are prohibited from using restraints on pregnant offenders in their third trimester, except in extraordinary circumstances. Specific procedures for the intake and care of pregnant offenders are mandated, including various aspects of maternal health care and postpartum recovery.

- **Admissibility of Certain Evidence in Criminal Cases:** The bill expands the admissibility of statements made by children under 18 years of age and visual or audio recordings of children or vulnerable persons in criminal proceedings, under specified circumstances.
- **Good Time Credit:** Modifications are made to provisions regarding offenders' eligibility for good time credit. The accumulation of good time credit does not mandate release; the parole board retains discretion in determining release dates. Criteria for earning good time credit are specified, and the loss of credit due to conduct violations is outlined. Offenders sentenced to death or life without probation or parole are ineligible for good time credit.

The passage of this bill represents a victory for compassion, fairness, and progress in our criminal justice system,” Perkins, R-Bowling Green, said. “By removing barriers to SNAP benefits for nonviolent offenders, prohibiting the use of restraints on pregnant inmates, and enhancing support for post-release employment, we are taking meaningful steps towards rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.”

The bill's provisions, which received strong public support during the committee process, reflect a collective effort to address systemic challenges and promote positive outcomes for offenders transitioning back into society. HB 1777 now heads to the Missouri Senate for consideration.

Representative Chad Perkins, a Republican, represents parts of Ralls, Monroe, Lincoln, and Pike counties (District 40). He was elected to his first two-year term in November 2020. For more information, please contact Rep. Perkins’ office at 573-751-4028 or by email at Chad.Perkins@House.Mo.Gov.

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