



## Missouri House of Representatives

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### Missouri House Passes Groundbreaking Legislation to Combat School Bullying

**JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.** – With recent high-profile incidents of bullying and violence in mind, the Missouri House of Representatives has passed HBs 1715 & 2630, also known as the “Missouri Childhood Hero Act. This legislation, sponsored by State Representative Tricia Byrnes, marks a significant step forward in ensuring the safety and well-being of students across the state.

HBs 1715 & 2630 aim to ensure that students who are the targets of bullies are not re-victimized by school districts’ “zero-tolerance” policies, which often suspend both instigators and those who seek to defend themselves. The Act also seeks to ensure that schools investigate incidents before meting out punishments.

“Our goal is to ensure that victims aren’t automatically suspended just for being involved or protecting themselves,” Byrnes, R-Wentzville, said. “By implementing clear policies and support mechanisms, we are empowering schools to effectively address and prevent bullying, creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all. I’m very proud of how legislators from both parties came together to stand up for Missouri kids.

The bill would require that public school districts and charter schools restrict the use of such zero-tolerance policies, and require administrators considering punishments to weigh statements from students who acted in self-defense. School employees or volunteers who intervene in incidents would be immune from liability when following specific procedures, and districts and charters would be immune from civil liability for disciplinary actions when proper protocols are followed.

It would also extend counseling programs not only to victims, but also to those who engage in bullying, recognizing that they often need help as well. Representative John Black, R-Marshfield, who sponsored HB 2630, said “Someone in committee said it well: ‘Hurt people, hurt people.’ This tries to address the situation by addressing both the student being bullied, and to offer help to the student doing the bullying.”

In cases in which investigations find that an incident meets the criteria of 2<sup>nd</sup> degree harassment, law enforcement or the state Children's Division would be notified, depending on the age of the instigator.

House Speaker Dean Plocher praised the passage of HBs 1715 & 2630, emphasizing the importance of bipartisan efforts to combat bullying in schools. Speaker Plocher stated: "I am proud to see the Missouri House come together to pass this critical legislation. HBs 1715 & 2630 reflect our commitment to protecting our students and fostering a culture of respect and kindness in our schools. By working collaboratively, we can make meaningful strides towards ending bullying and ensuring every child feels safe and supported."

The passage of HBs 1715 & 2630 signal a significant victory in the ongoing fight against school bullying in Missouri. With strong bipartisan support and a commitment to prioritizing the well-being of students, this legislation sets a precedent for proactive and effective measures to create safer school environments. The Act now heads to the Missouri Senate for further consideration.

*Rep. Tricia Byrnes, a Republican, represents part of St. Charles County, District 63 in the Missouri House of Representatives. Rep. Byrnes was elected in November 2022. For more information, please contact Rep. Byrnes at 573-751-1460 or by email at [Tricia.Byrnes@house.mo.gov](mailto:Tricia.Byrnes@house.mo.gov).*

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