Missouri House Passes HB 495 to Strengthen Public Safety and Address Crime

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – This week, the Missouri House of Representatives passed HCS #2 HB 495, a sweeping public safety measure aimed at addressing crime, policing, and penalties for various offenses across the state. The bill, sponsored by State Representative Brad Christ, introduces significant changes designed to enhance public safety and address law enforcement challenges statewide.

A key provision in the bill establishes a new Board of Police Commissioners to oversee the St. Louis Police Department, effective August 28, 2025. The new board will consist of four local citizen commissioners, along with the Mayor of St. Louis, providing direct authority over the city's police force.

Proponents argue this move will bring stability, improve public safety, and address issues related to rising crime and officer retention. Critics, however, see it as an unnecessary shift away from local governance.

"For over a century, things remained unchanged, but after the shift, we've seen the police force stretched thin and crime rise. Some argue crime is down—I disagree. When you factor in population decline due to crime, the per capita numbers tell a different story. Crimes are underreported, multiple incidents are counted as one, and justifiable homicides skew the data," Rep. Christ, R-St. Louis, said. "The truth is this: since the boards changed, the city has lost nearly 40,000 residents—a 13% decline. Over 500 businesses have left since 2019. More than a thousand officers have walked away. The patrol budget has been slashed by tens of millions. Investors won't commit. These are the indisputable facts that speak louder than any manipulated crime stat."

Other notable provisions in the bill include:
- **Enhanced Penalties for Stunt Driving and Street Takeovers**: Repeat offenders will now face felony charges, aiming to curb dangerous driving behaviors.

- **Strengthened Child Welfare Protections**: First-degree child endangerment will be classified as a "dangerous felony," especially when involving fentanyl or other drugs.
- **Expanded Definition of Rioting**: The legislation broadens the scope of rioting and increases penalties, while removing the need to prove conspiracy in related offenses.
- **School Safety Committee**: A new Committee on School Safety will be created to develop guidelines to prevent school firearm violence.
- **Immigration Reporting**: Law enforcement agencies will be required to report the immigration status of criminal offenders to the state.
- **Increased Penalties for Crime**: The bill introduces tougher penalties for crimes like burglary, organized retail theft, tampering with water supplies, and sex trafficking of minors.

The bill also includes provisions that allow law enforcement agencies to request assistance from other jurisdictions, including out-of-state agencies. Additionally, it permits police vehicles involved in undercover operations to forgo using audible or visual signals when conducting surveillance or speed enforcement.

"This bill is a vital step forward in making Missouri's communities safer," Rep. Christ said. "By increasing accountability, providing the resources law enforcement needs, and implementing tougher penalties for crime, we are taking proactive measures to protect Missouri families. This robust bill will create a foundation for a safer Missouri."

With a vote of 106-47, HB 495 now heads to the Missouri Senate for further review. If passed and signed into law, the bill will significantly reshape law enforcement policies and crime penalties across the state.

Representative Brad Christ, a Republican, represents part of St. Louis County (District 96) in the Missouri House of Representatives. He was elected to his first two-year term in November 2022. For more information, please contact Rep. Christ at 573-751-2150 or by email at Brad.Christ@House.Mo.Gov.

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