



Missouri House of Representatives

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Rep. Tricia Byrnes Introduces HB 2512 to Strengthen Early Mental Health Intervention

Calls on Leaders to No Longer Look Away from Violence

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – State Representative Tricia Byrnes has filed HB 2512, the Care Before Predictable Harm Act, legislation intended to strengthen Missouri’s approach to severe mental illness by encouraging earlier, more effective intervention before tragedy strikes.

The proposed legislation responds to a difficult reality facing Missouri and the nation: systems too often intervene only after lives are lost, families are forever changed, and communities are left to heal. The legislation seeks to shift that approach toward earlier, lawful intervention and meaningful care when warning signs are clear.

“Missouri has been forcing families to wait for a crisis, an arrest, or a body bag before the state will act,” Byrnes, R-Wentzville, stated. “This bill says we intervene before predictable harm, not after irreversible loss.”

HB 2512, if passed during the legislative session, would aim to incorporate the following:

- End Missouri’s reliance on prison or jail as the primary or sole pathway to mental health
- Provide treatment for individuals with severe mental illness
- Replace the “imminent danger” standard with a predictable-harm standard, allowing intervention before tragedy occurs
- Align mental health law with modern crisis response and evidence-based medical practice
- Ensure treatment occurs in clinical settings through court-supervised processes and not as a condition of incarceration.

- Allow families and frontline professionals to act before irreversible harm occurs
- Create accountability through statewide reporting on outcomes and harm prevention

Rep. Byrnes noted that recent national tragedies have once again brought attention to alarming gaps in the mental health system—moments that briefly command headlines but leave Missouri families grappling with long-term consequences.

“For those living with severe mental illness, and for the people who love them, the effects don’t fade when the news cycle moves on,” she said. “Law enforcement officers across Missouri have made real progress in crisis response and de-escalation, often arriving as the last line of defense in situations they were never meant to solve. But outdated mental health laws leave police with no sustainable options, creating a revolving door that delays harm instead of preventing it.”

She stands on the fact that across the country, families like the Reiner family have publicly described watching a loved one deteriorate while being told nothing could be done until imminent danger occurred. Missouri families have faced the same barriers: begging for help, cycling loved ones through emergency rooms, homelessness, or jail, only to be turned away by laws that wait too long. Each time lawmakers delay reform, the cost is measured in lives disrupted or lost. This legislation would reject performative outrage and instead offer a concrete, lawful path to intervene when harm is predictable and preventable.

“We do not honor victims by doing nothing,” said Byrnes. “Instead, we must learn from these moments and act with real purpose. Care must come before predictable harm.”

Rep. Byrnes hopes that as national attention once again turns to the failures of America’s mental health system, Missouri can step forward with a model that prioritizes care, due process, and prevention, and challenge other states to stop looking away. She anticipates HB 2512 to garner support from colleagues on both sides of the aisle when the legislative session convenes on Wednesday, January 7th, 2026.

State Representative Tricia Byrnes, a Republican, represents part of St. Charles County (District 63) in the Missouri House of Representatives. She was elected to her first two-year term in November 2022. For more information, please contact Rep. Byrnes at 573-751-1460 or by email at Tricia.Byrnes@house.mo.gov.