



Missouri House of Representatives

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Missouri House Approves Legislation to Protect Children and Vulnerable Persons from Trafficking and Exploitation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – In a significant move to combat sex and human trafficking and safeguard the rights of children and vulnerable individuals, the Missouri House of Representatives has passed HBs 1706 & 1539. The bill, sponsored by State Representative Jeff Myers, received overwhelming support in the House, marking a crucial step forward in the state's efforts to address these pressing issues.

The legislation aims to address issues related to sex and human trafficking in the Show-Me State by establishing essential mechanisms to tackle sex and human trafficking, including the creation of the "Committee on Sex and Human Trafficking Training." This committee, composed of diverse stakeholders, will annually evaluate and establish guidelines for mandatory training to combat trafficking. Additionally, the bill establishes the "Statewide Council Against Adult Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children," which will play a vital role in coordinating efforts statewide to combat these crimes.

Representative Myers told colleagues that the state has got to think of human trafficking in broader terms than how it is defined. He said it goes beyond, "using fraud, force, or coercion to exploit a person for labor, services, or commercial sex."

"This legislation underscores our commitment to protecting our most vulnerable citizens from the scourge of trafficking and exploitation," Myers, R-Warrenton, said. "By establishing robust training programs, creating oversight mechanisms, and enhancing penalties for offenders, we are sending a clear message that Missouri will not tolerate these heinous crimes."

The bill mandates training on sex and human trafficking for various professionals, including emergency medical technicians, nurses, prosecutors, juvenile officers, social workers, and peace officers. These measures aim to equip frontline workers with the knowledge and tools needed to identify and respond to instances of trafficking effectively.

Furthermore, the bill expands the admissibility of statements from children and vulnerable persons in criminal proceedings, ensuring that their voices are heard and justice is served. It also imposes restitution fees for individuals convicted of specified sexual offenses, with funds directed to support anti-trafficking efforts statewide.

"We must stand united in our commitment to combat sex and human trafficking," House Speaker Dean Plocher, R-Des Peres, said. "By enhancing prevention, strengthening prosecution, and supporting survivors, we are taking significant strides towards protecting the vulnerable and prosecuting those who exploit them. Together, we can build a future where every person's dignity and rights are upheld, and where the chains of trafficking are broken forever."

The bill will now move to the Senate for consideration, where lawmakers are expected to continue their bipartisan efforts to combat trafficking and protect vulnerable individuals.

Representative Jeff Myers, a Republican, represents Warren and Montgomery Counties (District 42) in the Missouri House of Representatives. He was elected to his first two-year term in November 2022. For more information, please contact Rep. Myers' office at 573-751-2689 or by email at Jeff.Myers@House.Mo.Gov.

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