

HB 1318 -- EMPLOYEES OF CERTAIN MENTAL HEALTH FACILITIES

SPONSOR: Riddle

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on General Laws by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill specifies that no state employee working in a maximum or medium security mental health facility or any portion of a mental health facility with maximum or medium security can be required to work more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period unless it is under a state of emergency declared by the Governor.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Net Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$651,000 in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the current working environment for employees of these mental health facilities is dangerous. They are forced to work long shifts in stressful situations with little time off in between shifts. Many of these employees are injured on a frequent basis and the patients in these facilities do not receive as high a quality of care. The bill doesn't prevent employees from choosing to work additional hours, but keeps them from being forced to do so.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Riddle; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 72; Dawn Freemyer, CWA-Missouri Employers Workers Union; Curtis Jacobs; Tom Martin; and Service Employees International Union, MO/KS State Council.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say it is difficult to maintain adequate staffing at these facilities. The turnover rate is high and they are significantly understaffed due to budget reductions. The ability to limit employees' working hours is restricted because the facility cannot function without proper staffing.

Others testifying on the bill were Division of Comprehensive Psychiatric Services, Department of Mental Health; and Missouri Corrections Officers Association.