

HCS HB 642 -- STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

SPONSOR: Kelly (141)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 9 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 10 to 3.

This bill prohibits any public institution of higher learning from taking any action or enforcing any policy that denies a religious student association any benefit available to any other student association or that discriminates against a religious student association with respect to such benefit, based on that association's requirement that its leaders or members adhere to the association's sincerely held religious beliefs, or comply with its sincere religious practice requirements or standards of conduct. An association may also require that members and leaders be committed to furthering the association's religious missions as such beliefs, requirements, standards, or missions are defined by the association or religion upon which the association is based.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill does not support one religious belief over another, it simply gives support to student groups that want to practice their faith on campus. There have not been any reported incidents in Missouri of student groups being penalized for requiring that members or leaders of the group adhere to the group's religious beliefs but supporters believe that it is important to have this law in place to prevent any possible future problems.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kelly; Gene Austin; Michelle Cooper; Pamela Cooper; Concerned Women For America of Missouri; Asha Faison; Rasaan Gouldbourne; Missouri Baptist Convention; Lila Jenkins; Tammy Ko; Crystal Martin, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries USA; Missouri Catholic Conference; Missouri Family Network; and Michael Whitehead, Missouri Baptist Convention.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.