

HCS HB 1725 -- SPORTS OFFICIALS

SPONSOR: Barnes (28)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 7 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 12 to 0.

This bill expands the definition of "special victim" under Section 565.002, RSMo, to include sports officials at a sporting event while performing their duties as sports officials.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that what is happening to sports officials at all levels these days is terrible, and 23 other states have passed legislation to increase the penalty for assaults when they're committed against sports officials. One witness testified that he was officiating a game and was assaulted by a parent with an aluminum bottle, and the parent's punishment was five years' probation. While many officials officiate because of their love of sports and their love of kids wanting to participate in sports, there is a shortage of officials because many fear for their safety. Enhancing the penalty will certainly not stop all assaults against sports officials, but it could potentially serve as a deterrent. Assaults against sports officials are definitely on the rise, and school officials are doing their best to deter the incidents. A lot of times the officials are teenagers but parents and family members of participants do not care about the age of the official.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Barnes; Mike Wood; David Adams Thompson, Greater Kansas City Officials Association; Kenny Seifert, Missouri State High School Activities Association; and Richard Schulte.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.