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COMMITTEES
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Subcommittee on Medicaid Reform
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Insurance Policy
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Health and Mental Health Policy



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Justin Hill
State Representative
District 108

Dear Speaker Wilson, President Adams, and Members of the Utah Legislature:

As you consider bail reform legislation, House Bill 206, I wanted to make you aware that a very similar effort was implemented in Missouri which has caused major concerns in public safety.

This policy went into effect in July, 2019, and the results have been nothing but terrible. We have anecdotal evidence of an increase in crime as a result of these policies, which we are still looking into. We know for a fact that defendants are thumbing their nose at the system in greater numbers. In my home county, our Sheriff (one of several who echoed similar results) testified that failures to appear in court have increased by 30% as a result of the reforms. Without bail agents involved or bail imposed, there is no one responsible to return defendants to court. We have also seen high profile cases where extremely violent offenders are getting out of jail and going on to commit heinous crimes including homicide.

The greatest threat we have seen with the bail reform in Missouri is restricting judicial discretion to impose bail, which has resulted in a significant uptick in releasing defendants on their own recognizance who then reoffend or simply fail to appear in court. In addition, the presumption in favor of release has created a top-down judicial culture which appears to be driving additional releases. Lower courts are operating as if the upper courts are looking over their shoulder constantly in fear of being ridiculed for imposing too high of a bail requirement.

I introduced legislation this year (H.B. 1937) to repeal the court rules that implemented this bail reform. Instead, many of my colleagues and I are taking a more measured approach and looking into solutions that impact the issue before it escalates to incarceration – like treatment for those with mental disorders and drug addiction. I would encourage you not to go down this road and instead maintain your current process where judges have discretion to set appropriate bail and conditions of release. If you have any further questions about what is happening in Missouri, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Hill", written over a white background.

Rep. Justin Hill
Missouri House of Representatives