



NEWS

From the Office of Representative
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140th District

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Rep. Dixon Introduces Children's Bill of Courtroom Rights *Springfield Representative Seeks Increased Protection for Child Witnesses*

Jefferson City, MO — Recently, Rep. Bob Dixon (R-Springfield) introduced legislation designed to establish additional safeguards for children who are called to testify in court as victims or witnesses. House Bill 1611, the Children's Bill of Courtroom Rights, will foster a courtroom environment suitable for children who are required to testify.

"Missouri courts have always been fair and impartial in their treatment of child witnesses," said Dixon. "However, when it comes to children, special needs require special protection. The measures in House Bill 1611 will guarantee that their voices are heard, and the truth sought, without imposing additional trauma."

"The CBR allows for true justice to occur," stated Barbara Brown, Executive Director of the Springfield Child Advocacy Center. "Small, seemingly insignificant changes in the way young children are treated in a court room setting make a monumental difference in the way they will respond in a court of law. If the truth is the goal, then ponder this: Children can't quickly grow up to meet the criminal justice system's needs, so we must change the system's response to them in order to ensure justice is served. This can absolutely be accomplished without endangering the defendant's rights. It is the humane approach."

Among the rights guaranteed by the Children's Bill of Courtroom Rights would be the right to a comfort item when testifying, the right to the presence of a support person when testifying, and a right to be comfortable when testifying. The bill seeks to ensure accurate testimony by making sure that children who testify are comfortable and adequately understand the questions being asked.

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