



Our Mission:

- *To identify, research and discuss critical issues*
- *To mobilize, energize and inspire ourselves and others to action*
- *To work as individuals and in community for social justice*

Our Vision:

Women working together to advance a world that values equity and justice for all, abolishes discrimination, and protects the planet.

Testimony in Opposition to HB106

May 4, 2020

My name is Ruth Ehresman. With Linda Zazove I am the Co-President of Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice. Women's Voices is a 15-year-old grassroots organization with 500 members in the St. Louis region. The focus of our work is to advance greater equity and justice, to abolish discrimination wherever it exists, and to protect the planet. Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to your consideration of HJR106.

One of the things the pandemic has done is to shine a light on the inadequacy of Missouri's current health system. It is clear that vulnerable populations are paying the highest price as COVID-19 spreads across our state. It is also clear that those who lack health insurance are especially vulnerable.

It is incomprehensible to us that, during this pandemic, the legislature is prioritizing its time on a proposal that will likely decrease the number of insured, rather than addressing issues related to mitigating the impact of the pandemic.

It is also troubling that this important issue is being brought up at a time when it is difficult for citizens to be meaningfully involved in the legislative process because of the necessity of social distancing, and the legislature is challenged to be transparent in its deliberations.

Women's Voices believes that work requirements as flawed social policy will be an unnecessary burden on many families and individuals and will result in some individuals needlessly losing coverage for which they are eligible. For this reason, we oppose HJR106.

We also believe there are fiscal arguments for opposing it. Missouri can, and should learn, from the states that have implemented work requirements. Enacting work requirements in effect establishes an unfunded mandate. If Missouri enacts work requirements, it will also be required to provide work supports including training, childcare and transportation. These are not eligible for federal reimbursement under Medicaid.

Reporting requirements will also require additional administrative resources for the Department of Social Services. The GAO recently found that the new administrative costs for states that have waivers allowing work requirements ranged from \$6.1 to \$271.6 million. DSS is not currently staffed to be able to track the hours worked of those insured by Medicaid. The GAO report did not include costs associated with training and other work supports.

The fiscal note posted on-line for HJR106 does not reflect either the need for additional staff, or the costs of work supports. It does state that an estimated 2282 individuals may have a right to an administrative hearing when benefits are denied. Only one additional staff is estimated to be needed for this.

Women's Voices urges you to delay any decision on this bill until a fiscal note is developed that accurately outlines the fiscal cost of work requirements, and identifies where Missouri might find general revenue for these during this extremely volatile time of financial uncertainty for the state. We urge an informed discussion of this issue, and both its social and fiscal ramifications. We believe such a discussion will make a clear case for rejecting HB106. Thank you for considering our position.