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## Concerns for SB68

ACT4MO opposes SB68 (*current version House Committee Substitute for Senate Substitute for Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 68*). The bill's massive size and sprawling scope make it a fundamentally flawed piece of legislation. At 86 pages, it reaches far beyond education, creating a tangled web of provisions that threaten unintended and potentially harmful consequences for our schools, students, and families.

### The Size and Scope of SB68: The Core of Our Opposition

The sheer breadth of the final version of SB 68 is its greatest weakness. Spanning dozens of pages and touching on issues well outside the realm of education, this bill is a recipe for confusion and overreach. Legislation this expansive risks overwhelming lawmakers, who may not fully grasp the ripple effects of each clause. ACT4MO believes that effective laws should be precise and focused, tackling specific problems without casting too wide a net. Instead, this bill's size and scope invite chaos, undermining its noble intentions with the potential for missteps that could burden our education system.

### Specific Concerns: Provisions in SB68 That Miss the Mark

Beyond its unwieldy scale, several provisions within the bill raise red flags:

- **Lead Testing Requirements (Section 160.077):** Safe drinking water matters, but the bill's rigid mandates could saddle schools with excessive costs and logistical headaches. Tying these rules to federal standards also hints at unwelcome federal intrusion.
- **School Safety Measures (Section 160.261):** Vague wording around reporting violent acts and defining "weapons" opens the door to uneven enforcement or even abuse. This could foster fear and mistrust rather than safety.

These examples highlight how the bill's broad approach can lead to practical problems, outweighing any potential benefits with real risks to our schools.

### The Danger of Vague Language and Overreach

The bill's lack of clarity compounds its dangers. Terms like "need to know" in Section 160.261 are subjective, potentially leading to inconsistent application. Likewise, giving superintendents unchecked discretion to adjust suspensions could breed bias or favoritism. This vagueness invites overreach, threatening the fairness and stability of our education system.

## **A Bright Spot: SB68 Support for Phonics**

Amid our concerns, ACT4MO strongly supports one aspect of the bill: the ban on the “three-cueing system” and the shift back to a phonics-based reading approach (Section 170.014). Research backs phonics as a superior method for teaching reading, and we see this as a win for Missouri’s students. Yet, this positive step is overshadowed by the bill’s broader flaws.

## **The Bigger Picture: Harm Outweighs Good in SB68**

While we cheer the phonics provision, the bad and potentially harmful effects of HCS SS SCS SB 68 are too significant to ignore. Its sprawling scope, problematic provisions, and vague language create a perfect storm of risks—unintended consequences that could hurt students, teachers, and families across Missouri. Good intentions aren’t enough; the execution here falls short.