

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2242

As Reported By House Committee On:
Corrections

Title: An act relating to youthful offender placement.

Brief Description: Authorizing the department of corrections to transfer juveniles under age eighteen to juvenile correctional institutions.

Sponsors: Representatives Leonard, Cooke, Wolfe, Morris, L. Johnson, J. Kohl, Roland, Karahalios and Springer; by request of Department of Corrections and Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Corrections, January 19, 1994, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Morris, Chair; Mastin, Vice Chair; Long, Ranking Minority Member; Edmondson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; G. Cole; L. Johnson; Moak; Ogden; and Padden.

Staff: Antonio Sanchez (786-7383).

Background: The number of felony juvenile offenders under the age of 18 is increasing rapidly. One out of every four violent crimes is committed by a young person under the age of 18. There has been a 300 percent increase in hospital admissions for gunshot injuries involving juveniles since 1985. This rapid escalation of juvenile violent crime is not just an urban phenomena. Virtually every county in Washington is experiencing exponential rises in rates of juvenile violence, regardless of size or location.

Currently, any child under the age of 16 who is convicted of a felony crime and is committed for a term of confinement in an adult correctional facility can be transferred to a juvenile institution until the age of 18. This determination is made jointly by the secretary of the Department of Corrections and the secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services.

The average cost per year in Washington State for incarcerating an individual in an adult correctional facility is approximately \$27,000. Juvenile institutional costs are approximately \$48,000 per person per year.

Summary of Amended Bill: The age at which a juvenile offender can be transferred from an adult correctional institution to a juvenile correctional institution is raised from age 16 to age 18. The age at which a juvenile offender must be returned to an adult correctional facility is raised from age 18 to age 21.

The secretary of the Department of Corrections is required to make an independent assessment and evaluation of the juvenile offender prior to placing him or her in a juvenile facility. A juvenile felony offender committed to an adult correctional facility can be placed in a juvenile institution when the secretary of the Department of Corrections, with the consent of the secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services, determines the transfer is in the best interest of the juvenile offender.

Both the secretary of the Department of Corrections and the secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services are required to regularly review the juvenile offender's progress to determine which corrections system is the most appropriate institutional environment to house the juvenile offender.

The Department of Corrections is required to pay \$27,000 per year to the Department of Social and Health Services for each juvenile transferred from an adult corrections facility to a juvenile detention facility.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill does not require the Department of Corrections to pay \$27,000 per year to the Department of Social and Health Services for each juvenile transferred from an adult corrections facility to a juvenile detention facility.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 17, 1994.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill would provide greater protection for vulnerable youth.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: James Thatcher, Chief of Classifications; and Ruben Cedeno, Director of Offender Programs, Department of

Corrections.