

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2546

As Reported By House Committee On:
Criminal Justice & Corrections

Title: An act relating to rehabilitating juvenile offenders through art education.

Brief Description: Reducing juvenile crime through art education.

Sponsors: Representatives Radcliff, Ballasiotes, Dickerson, Costa and O'Brien.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Criminal Justice & Corrections: 1/30/98, 2/5/98 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Ballasiotes, Chairman; Quall, Ranking Minority Member; O'Brien, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cairnes; Dickerson; Mitchell and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Benson, Vice Chairman; Koster, Vice Chairman; and McCune.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background: The Experimental Gallery was founded in 1992 at the State Capital Museum to provide experimental learning opportunities to youth who are experiencing problems in their lives. Since November 1992 the Experimental Gallery has worked in close partnership with Washington's Department of Social and Health Services' Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) and has organized numerous projects that have connected over 1,000 disenfranchised, violent, and addictive youth with the community through arts.

The program is designed to alleviate recidivism by assisting institutional staff and schools to meet the special educational and social needs of juvenile offenders. This is done by giving participating students opportunities to work with artists and writers and by introducing them to the value of education through culturally relevant, experimental activities (i.e., art and humanities projects). This program is designed to assist youth with the acquisition of vocational skills, self-esteem, and a sense of community identity by demonstrating success.

The Experimental Gallery matches professionals from the art world with youth throughout six of the state's juvenile facilities as well as offers programs to at-risk youth in local communities. All such programs are planned in partnership with appropriate community-based organizations such as Community Mental Health, Community Youth Services, and local YMCAs.

Artists that are selected have previous experience with at-risk youth or incarcerated populations. All artists and consultants receive mandatory juvenile rehabilitation training which includes risk assessment and security.

The program partially operates under contract with the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration and receives funding from the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (Department of Social and Health Services), as well as other numerous private sources.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (JRA) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must contract with the Experimental Gallery Program. An appropriation of \$150,000 dollars is appropriated from the general fund to the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1999 for the sole purpose of this expansion.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The amended bill authorizes the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services to contract directly with the Experimental Gallery instead of with the Children's Museum.

Appropriation: An appropriation of \$150,000 dollars is appropriated from the general fund to the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1999 for the sole purpose of this expansion.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 1998.

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

Testimony For: The goal of the Experimental Gallery is to reduce criminal and addictive behavior by building self-esteem, academic achievement, and community identity through the arts and by providing a follow-up mentor program. A positive accomplishment of the program was the students' progress on their learning goals. Students have demonstrated a marked improvement in their social and academic skills. This program has a proven reputation of helping youth transition back into the community.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Sherry Appleton, Washington Defender Association; Susan Warner, Experimental Gallery; Michael Crane, Experimental Gallery; George LeClair, Children's Alliance; and Representative Kip Tokuda (pro).