

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6008

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Human Services & Corrections, March 2, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to authorizing the participation of youth as decision makers in dispositions of minor offenses and rules violations.

**Brief Description:** Creating youth courts.

**Sponsors:** Senators Costa, Hargrove and Long.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 3/2/99, 3/2/99 [DPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6008 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Long, Patterson, Sheahan, Stevens and Zarelli.

**Staff:** Lynn Hale (786-7430)

**Background:** An increasing awareness exists that an integrated response from the government and the community is needed to address the problem of crime in our state. Youth court programs offer a means for involving the community in a partnership with the juvenile justice system to respond to the problem of juvenile crime. Youth court programs respond to juvenile crime by increasing awareness of the delinquency issues within the local community, and mobilizing the community to take an active role in addressing the problem of juvenile crime within the community.

Youth court programs are designed to provide an alternative within the juvenile justice system for first time, nonviolent juvenile offenders in which community youth determine the appropriate sanctions for the offender. Youth court programs hold youthful offenders accountable and provide educational services to offenders and youth volunteers in an effort to promote long-term behavioral change that leads to enhanced public safety.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** Youth courts are a diversion unit to be operated under the supervision of the juvenile court system.

The Office of the Administrator for the Courts encourages juvenile courts to work with cities and counties to implement youth court programs. Youth courts are developed in accordance with the American Probation and Parole Association Teen Courts Project guidelines. Youth courts may be established by law enforcement entities, municipal courts, district courts, juvenile probation departments, nonprofit organizations, and schools under the supervision of juvenile court. They target diversion-eligible offenders between the ages of 8 and 17.

Juveniles are held accountable for their behavior and are educated on the impact their behavior has on others.

Youth courts have authority over juveniles who, along with a parent, request youth court involvement. Juveniles must admit that they have committed the offense and waive any privilege against self-incrimination concerning the offense. The juvenile and parent must agree to comply with the youth court disposition of the case.

A youth court may decline to accept a juvenile for youth court disposition for any reason. A juvenile may withdraw from youth court disposition at any time.

Youth courts give the victim of an offense the opportunity to be notified, present, or heard in any youth court proceeding.

Youth courts notify the juvenile court after all conditions have been fulfilled, including restitution.

Dispositional options include those available under diversion and may also include participating in law related education classes, mentoring programs, or future youth court proceedings, and writing apology letters.

Youth courts may not impose a period of confinement. Juveniles may be required to pay reasonable fees for participation in youth court, education classes, counseling, or treatment.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction encourages school districts to participate in student court programs for students who violate school policies. Local school boards may provide school credit for students who participate in student or youth courts.

Municipal and district courts may utilize youth courts for traffic and civil infractions.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill was not considered.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 22, 1999.

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

**Testimony For:** Youth courts will provide a great opportunity for youths and the community to participate in the juvenile justice system. Youths will be held accountable for their actions by their peers. Student participants will gain an understanding of the justice system and learn valuable leadership skills. Programs will be customized to fit the needs of each community.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Peter Finch, Principal, Granite Falls High School; Kiersten Jensen, Granite Falls Teen Court; Jennifer Gibson, Granite Falls Teen Court; Pam Daniels, Snohomish

County Clerk; Sharon Paradis, Snohomish County Juvenile Court; Tom McBride, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.