

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2001 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 918 (Delegate Barve, *et al.*)
Judiciary

Juvenile Justice - Group Homes and Residential Facilities - Sexual Offenses

This bill prohibits the Department of Juvenile Justice from placing in a private group home or residential facility a child who has been adjudicated delinquent for a first or second degree rape; a first, second, third, or fourth degree sexual offense; or an attempted rape or sexual offense.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures would increase significantly to provide State-operated facilities for all juvenile sexual offenders. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is not restricted in its placement of children who have been adjudicated delinquent.

Background: In December 2000, two teenage residents at Crossroads House, a Germantown therapeutic group home used by DJJ, allegedly committed several nighttime property crimes over a ten-day period using a window to exit and reenter the facility. The boys were arrested on December 16. Alarms were installed on the windows of the group home, rules requiring more frequent bed checks were established, and victims of the alleged crime spree were reimbursed by First Home Care Corp., the private company

that operated Crossroads House. Due to continued community pressure, however, the group home closed in February 2001, and the six boys who were living at the home were relocated.

According to the *Washington Post*, First Home Care literature said Crossroads House “accepts boys who are 14 to 17, ‘not actively suicidal or homicidal,’ not ‘actively addicted’ to drugs or alcohol, who have completed a sex offender program and do not have a recent history of ‘unprovoked acts of physical violence.’” A spokesperson for the company said some of the boys in the group home were being transitioned back into the community.

Sex offenders are a particularly difficult population to place. In its response to a 2000 *Joint Chairmen’s Report* request, DJJ indicated that 86% of committed placements were made within 50 days of a disposition in fiscal 2000, but 150 days elapsed before 86% of sex offenders could be placed.

The majority of Maryland juveniles in committed placements are located in facilities operated by private vendors. Maryland’s two largest and most secure juvenile placement facilities, the Charles H. Hickey, Jr. School and the Victor Cullen Academy, which can house up to 550 youths between them, are both owned by the State but operated by Youth Services International, Inc. There is a special 27-bed sexual offender unit at Hickey.

State Expenditures: DJJ did not respond to requests for information regarding this bill, but it is expected that the cost for the State to establish, staff, operate, and possibly build new facilities for sexual offenders would be substantial. The cost to plan, build, and equip a 24-bed facility is estimated at \$7.1 million. The annual costs of existing private residential placements for juveniles in Maryland range from \$40,000 to \$60,000 per juvenile. The Department of Legislative Services does not have information on the number of juvenile sex offenders currently in committed placements in Maryland.

Small Business Effect: Small businesses that provide residential treatment and services to juvenile sex offenders would not be permitted to do business in Maryland.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Legislative Services

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