

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 407 Criminal Gang Prevention

SPONSOR(S): Ingram and others

TIED BILLS: None **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 788

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Criminal Justice Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N	Cunningham	Cunningham
2) Justice Appropriations Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N	McAuliffe	Jones Darity
3) Judiciary Committee	18 Y, 0 N	Cunningham	Havlicak

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The bill contains a variety of provisions relating to criminal gangs. Specifically, the bill:

- Increases the penalty for violating s. 810.0975(2), F.S. (trespassing in school safety zones), from a second degree misdemeanor to a first degree misdemeanor if the person has previously been convicted of any offense contained in ch. 874, F.S. (relating to criminal gangs).
- Amends s. 874.05, F.S., to make it a second degree felony, ranked in Level 5 of the offense severity ranking chart, for a person to intentionally cause, encourage, solicit, or recruit another person *under the age of 13* to become a criminal gang member where a condition of membership or continued membership is the commission of any crime. The bill makes second or subsequent violations of this provision a first degree felony, ranked in Level 7 of the offense severity ranking chart.
- Authorizes jails to designate an individual to be responsible for assessing whether each inmate is a criminal gang member or associate and to transmit information on inmates believed to be criminal gang members or associates to the arresting law enforcement agency.
- Amends the criminal gang multiplier in s. 921.0024, F.S., so that the multiplier can be applied with a finding by the judge (rather than the jury) that the defendant committed the offense for the purposes of benefitting, promoting, or furthering the interests of a criminal gang in instances where the lowest permissible sentence does not exceed the statutory maximum sentence for the offense.

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference (CJIC) met on February 27, 2013 and determined this bill may have an insignificant impact on state prison beds.

The bill is effective October 1, 2013.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

School Safety Zones

Section 810.0975, F.S., relates to trespassing in “school safety zones,” which is defined as “in, on, or within 500 feet of any real property owned by or leased to any public or private elementary, middle, or high school or school board and used for elementary, middle, or high school education.” Subsection (2) of the statute:

- Requires public and private school principals to notify law enforcement to prohibit specified persons¹ from loitering in a school safety zone.²
- Prohibits specified persons³ from entering the premises or trespassing within a school safety zone or remaining on such premises or within such school safety zone one hour before the start of a school session until one hour after the conclusion of a school session.
- Prohibits specified persons⁴ from willfully failing to remove themselves from a school safety zone after a principal, who has a reasonable belief that the person will commit a crime or is engaged in harassment or intimidation of students entering or leaving school property, requests the person to leave the school safety zone.⁵

A violation of s. 810.0975(2), F.S., is currently a second degree misdemeanor, punishable by up to 60 days in county jail and a \$500 fine.⁶

Effect of the Bill

The bill makes a violation of s. 810.0975(2), F.S., a first degree misdemeanor if the person has previously been convicted of any offense contained in ch. 874, F.S. (relating to criminal gangs). A first degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to one year in county jail and a \$1,000 fine.⁷

Causing, Encouraging, Soliciting, or Recruiting Criminal Gang Membership

Section 874.05, F.S., makes it a third degree felony⁸ for a person to intentionally cause, encourage, solicit, or recruit another person to become a criminal gang member⁹ where a condition of membership or continued membership is the commission of any crime. This offense is ranked in Level 4 (22 sentencing points) of the offense severity ranking chart (ranking chart).¹⁰ Second or subsequent

¹ These persons include those who do not have legitimate business in the school safety zone, those who do not have authorization or license to enter or remain in a school safety zone, and those who do not have invitee status in the school safety zone. Section 810.0975(2)(a), F.S.

² Section 810.0975(2)(a), F.S.

³ *Supra* note 1.

⁴ *Supra* note 1.

⁵ Section 810.0975(2)(c), F.S.

⁶ Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ A third degree felony is punishable by up to five years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

⁹ Section 874.03(3), F.S., defines the term “criminal gang member” as a person who meets two or more of the following criteria: admits to criminal gang membership; is identified as a criminal gang member by a parent or guardian; is identified as a criminal gang member by a documented reliable informant; adopts the style of dress of a criminal gang; adopts the use of a hand sign identified as used by a criminal gang; has a tattoo identified as used by a criminal gang; associates with one or more known criminal gang members; is identified as a criminal gang member by an informant of previously untested reliability and such identification is corroborated by independent information; is identified as a criminal gang member by physical evidence; has been observed in the company of one or more known criminal gang members four or more times; has authored any communication indicating responsibility for the commission of any crime by the criminal gang.

¹⁰ Criminal offenses are ranked in the “offense severity ranking chart” from level one (least severe) to level ten (most severe) and are assigned points based on the severity of the offense. A defendant’s sentence is calculated based on points, which are assigned for factors including: the offense for which the defendant is being sentenced; victim injury; the defendant’s prior record and other aggravating factors. The points are added in order to determine the “lowest permissible sentence” for the offense. If the total sentence

violations of the statute are second degree felonies, ranked in Level 5 (28 sentencing points) of the ranking chart.¹¹

Effect of the Bill

The bill amends s. 874.05, F.S., to make it a second degree felony for a person to intentionally cause, encourage, solicit, or recruit another person *under the age of 13* to become a criminal gang member where a condition of membership or continued membership is the commission of any crime. This offense is ranked in Level 5 of the ranking chart. The bill makes second or subsequent violations of this provision a first degree felony, ranked in Level 7 (56 sentencing points) of the ranking chart.¹²

The bill makes a conforming change in s. 435.04, F.S. (relating to background screening), correcting a reference to s. 874.05, F.S.

Jails – Inmate Gang Status

Section 951.23, F.S., contains a variety of provisions relating to county and municipal detention facilities (jails). For example, the statute requires county detention facilities to provide specified inmate data to the Department of Corrections, requires that jail model standards be developed, requires jails to contract for fire safety inspections, authorizes commissaries to be operated in jails and provides requirements for such operation, and provides criminal penalties for jail inmates who violate certain jail rules.¹³

Effect of the Bill

The bill amends s. 951.23, F.S., to authorize jails to designate an individual to be responsible for assessing whether each current inmate is a criminal gang member or associate using the criteria contained in s. 874.03, F.S., and to transmit information on inmates believed to be criminal gang members or associates to the arresting law enforcement agency.

Criminal Gang Offenses – Penalty Enhancements and Sentencing Multipliers

Criminal offenses are ranked in the ranking chart from level one (least severe) to level ten (most severe) and are assigned points based on the severity of the offense. A defendant's sentence is calculated based on points, which are assigned for factors such as: the offense for which the defendant is being sentenced; victim injury; the defendant's prior record; and other aggravating factors. The points are added in order to determine the "lowest permissible sentence" for the offense. The Criminal Punishment Code worksheet, found in s. 921.0024, F.S., is used to compute a defendant's total sentence points.

The Criminal Punishment Code worksheet contains a variety of sentencing multipliers that act to multiply a defendant's sentencing points by a certain number, thereby increasing the defendant's lowest permissible sentence. The worksheet currently contains a criminal gang multiplier that multiplies a defendant's sentence points by 1.5 if the defendant committed the offense for the purpose of benefitting, promoting, or furthering the interests of a criminal gang as prohibited under s. 874.04, F.S.

Section 874.04, F.S., provides that upon a finding by the factfinder that a defendant committed the charged offense for the purpose of benefitting, promoting, or furthering the interests of a criminal gang, the penalty for such offense can be enhanced. The statute specifies the extent to which such enhancement can be made and requires each of the findings required as a basis for such enhancement to be found beyond a reasonable doubt.

As noted above, the criminal gang multiplier in the worksheet multiplies a defendant's sentence points by 1.5 if the defendant committed the offense for the purpose of benefitting, promoting, or furthering the interests of a criminal gang *as prohibited under s. 874.04, F.S.* Section 874.04, F.S., requires the factfinder (i.e., the jury) to find that a defendant committed the offense for such purposes. This limits

points equals or is less than 44 points, the lowest permissible sentence is a non-state prison sanction (i.e., jail). If the total sentence points exceed 44 points, a prison sentence is the lowest permissible sentence.

¹¹ A second degree felony is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

¹² A first degree felony is punishable by up to 30 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

¹³ Section 951.23, F.S.

the instances in which the criminal gang multiplier can be used to those instances in which the jury has made the required finding. If the reference to s. 874.04, F.S., were removed from the multiplier, a *judge* could make the required finding so long as the lowest permissible sentence does not exceed the statutory maximum sentence for the charged offense.¹⁴

Effect of the Bill

The bill amends the criminal gang multiplier in s. 921.0024, F.S., to specify that a defendant's sentence points are multiplied by 1.5 if the defendant committed the offense for the purpose of benefitting, promoting, or furthering the interests of a criminal gang *as defined in s. 874.03, F.S.* As a result, the multiplier will be able to be applied with a finding by a *judge* that the defendant committed the offense for the purposes of benefitting, promoting, or furthering the interests of a criminal gang so long as the lowest permissible sentence does not exceed the statutory maximum sentence for the offense.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends s. 810.0975, F.S., relating to school safety zones; definition; trespass prohibited; penalty.

Section 2. Amends s. 874.05, F.S., relating to causing, encouraging, soliciting, or recruiting criminal gang membership.

Section 3. Amends s. 951.23, F.S., relating to county and municipal detention facilities; definitions; administration; standards and requirements.

Section 4. Amends s. 435.04, F.S., relating to level 2 screening standards.

Section 5. Amends s. 921.0022, F.S., relating to Criminal Punishment Code; offense severity ranking chart.

Section 6. Amends s. 921.0024, F.S., relating to Criminal Punishment Code; worksheet computations; scoresheets.

Section 7. Provides an effective date of October 1, 2013.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have any impact on state revenues.

2. Expenditures:

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference (CJIC) met on February 27, 2013, and determined this bill may have an insignificant impact on state prison beds.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have any impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

¹⁴ See *Mathew v. State*, 837 So.2d 1167 (Fla. 4th DCA 2003)(holding that pursuant to *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466 (2000), a jury must find that the facts necessary to impose a domestic violence multiplier exist beyond a reasonable doubt when the multiplier results in a sentence that exceeds the statutory maximum for the charged offense).

The bill may have an insignificant negative jail bed impact on local governments. The bill increases the penalty for violating s. 810.0975(2), F.S. (trespassing in school safety zones), from a second degree misdemeanor to a first degree misdemeanor if the person has previously been convicted of any offense contained in ch. 874, F.S. (relating to criminal gangs).

The bill authorizes jails to designate an individual to be responsible for assessing whether each current inmate is a criminal gang member or associate. However, the provision is permissive, so any fiscal impact would be at the discretion of the county or municipal detention facility.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

This bill appears to be exempt from the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution because it is a criminal law.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill does not appear to create a need for rulemaking or rulemaking authority.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

None.