

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Criminal Justice

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BILL: SB 602

INTRODUCER: Senator Bracy

SUBJECT: Mandatory Minimum Sentences

DATE: November 9, 2017

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

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	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Erickson</u>	<u>Jones</u>	<u>CJ</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>JU</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____
4.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 602 authorizes a court to depart from the 3-year mandatory minimum term of imprisonment applicable to trafficking in various controlled substances, excluding opioids and opiates. The departure is authorized if the court makes written findings that the violation only involved possession and that a factor, consideration, or circumstance clearly demonstrates that imposing the mandatory minimum term would constitute or result in an injustice. Therefore, the court may not depart from the mandatory minimum term if the drug trafficking violation involves sale, purchase, manufacture, delivery, or importation of a controlled substance.

The Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research estimates that the bill will have a "negative indeterminate" prison bed impact (an unquantifiable decrease in prison beds). See Section V. Fiscal Impact Statement.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Florida's Controlled Substance Schedules**

Section 893.03, F.S., classifies controlled substances into five categories, known as schedules. These schedules regulate the manufacture, distribution, preparation, and dispensing of the substances listed in the schedules. The most important factors in determining which schedule may apply to a substance are the "potential for abuse"<sup>1</sup> of the substance and whether there is a currently accepted medical use for the substance. The controlled substance schedules are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Pursuant to s. 893.035(3)(a), F.S., "potential for abuse" means a substance has properties as a central nervous system stimulant or depressant or a hallucinogen that create a substantial likelihood of the substance being: (1) used in amounts that create a hazard to the user's health or the safety of the community; (2) diverted from legal channels and distributed through illegal channels; or (3) taken on the user's own initiative rather than on the basis of professional medical advice.

- Schedule I substances (s. 893.03(1), F.S.) have a high potential for abuse and no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States. Use of these substances under medical supervision does not meet accepted safety standards.
- Schedule II substances (s. 893.03(2), F.S.) have a high potential for abuse and a currently accepted but severely restricted medical use in treatment in the United States. Abuse of these substances may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence.
- Schedule III substances (s. 893.03(3), F.S.) have a potential for abuse less than the Schedule I and Schedule II substances and a currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States. Abuse of these substances may lead to moderate or low physical dependence or high psychological dependence. Abuse of anabolic steroids may lead to physical damage.
- Schedule IV substances (s. 893.03(4), F.S.) have a low potential for abuse relative to Schedule III substances and a currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States. Abuse of these substances may lead to limited physical or psychological dependence relative to Schedule III substances.
- Schedule V substances (s. 893.03(5), F.S.) have a low potential for abuse relative to the substances in Schedule IV and a currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States. Abuse of these substances may lead to limited physical or psychological dependence relative to Schedule IV substances.

### **Punishment of Prohibited Drug Acts**

Section 893.13, F.S., in part, punishes unlawful possession, sale, purchase, manufacture, and delivery of a controlled substance. The penalty for violating s. 893.13, F.S., can depend on the act committed, the substance and quantity of the substance involved, and the location in which the violation occurred. For example, selling a controlled substance listed in s. 893.03(1)(c), F.S., which includes many synthetic controlled substances, is a third degree felony.<sup>2</sup> However, if that substance is sold within 1,000 feet of a K-12 school or other designated facility or location, the violation is a second-degree felony.<sup>3</sup> With three exceptions,<sup>4</sup> s. 893.13, F.S., does not provide for mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment.

Drug trafficking, which is punished in s. 893.135, F.S., consists of knowingly selling, purchasing, manufacturing, delivering, or bringing into this state (importation), or knowingly being in actual or constructive possession of, certain Schedule I or Schedule II controlled substances in a statutorily-specified quantity. The statute only applies to a limited number of such controlled substances. The controlled substance involved in the trafficking must meet a specified weight or quantity threshold.

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<sup>2</sup> Section 893.13(1)(a)2., F.S. A third-degree felony is punishable by up to 5 years in state prison, a fine of up to \$5,000, or both. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Section 893.13(1)(c)2., F.S. A second-degree felony is punishable by up to 15 years in state prison, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Exceptions: s. 893.13(1)(c)1., F.S. (selling, etc., certain Schedule I and II controlled substances within 1,000 feet of a K-12 school, park, community center, or publicly owned recreational facility); s. 893.13(1)(g)1., F.S. (manufacturing methamphetamine or phencyclidine in a structure or conveyance where any child under 16 is present); and s. 893.13(1)(g)2., F.S. (manufacturing methamphetamine or phencyclidine causes a child under 16 to suffer great bodily harm).

Most drug trafficking offenses are first degree felonies<sup>5</sup> and are subject to a mandatory minimum term<sup>6</sup> and a mandatory fine, which is determined by the weight or quantity range applicable to the weight or quantity of the substance involved in the trafficking.<sup>7</sup> For example, trafficking in 28 grams or more, but less than 200 grams, of cocaine, a first degree felony, is punishable by a 3-year mandatory minimum term of imprisonment and a mandatory fine of \$50,000.<sup>8</sup> Trafficking in 200 grams or more, but less than 400 grams, of cocaine, a first degree felony, is punishable by a 15-year mandatory minimum term of imprisonment and a mandatory fine of \$100,000.<sup>9</sup>

### **Criminal Punishment Code**

The Criminal Punishment Code<sup>10</sup> (Code) is Florida's "primary sentencing policy."<sup>11</sup> Noncapital felonies sentenced under the Code receive an offense severity level ranking (Levels 1-10).<sup>12</sup> Points are assigned and accrue based upon the level ranking assigned to the primary offense, additional offenses, and prior offenses. Sentence points escalate as the level escalates. Points may also be added or multiplied for other factors such as victim injury or the commission of certain offenses like a Level 7 or 8 drug trafficking offense. The lowest permissible sentence is any nonstate prison sanction in which total sentence points equal or are less than 44 points, unless the court determines that a prison sentence is appropriate. If total sentence points exceed 44 points, the lowest permissible sentence in prison months is calculated by subtracting 28 points from the total sentence points and decreasing the remaining total by 25 percent.<sup>13</sup> Absent mitigation,<sup>14</sup> the permissible sentencing range under the Code is generally the lowest permissible sentence scored up to and including the maximum penalty provided under s. 775.082, F.S.<sup>15</sup>

### **Mandatory Minimum Sentences and Departures**

Mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment limit judicial discretion in Code sentencing: "If the lowest permissible sentence is less than the mandatory minimum sentence, the mandatory minimum sentence takes precedence."<sup>16</sup> As previously noted, the sentencing range under the

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<sup>5</sup> A first degree felony is generally punishable by up to 30 years in state prison and a fine of up to \$10,000. However, when specifically provided by statute, a first degree felony may be punished by imprisonment for a term of years not exceeding life imprisonment. Sections 775.082 and 775.083, F.S.

<sup>6</sup> There are currently 56 mandatory minimum terms of imprisonment in s. 893.135, F.S., which range from three years to life imprisonment.

<sup>7</sup> See s. 893.135, F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 893.135(b)(1)a., F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Section 893.135(b)(1)b., F.S.

<sup>10</sup> Sections 921.002-921.0027, F.S. See chs. 97-194 and 98-204, L.O.F. The Code is effective for offenses committed on or after October 1, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> *Florida's Criminal Punishment Code: A Comparative Assessment (FY 2012-2013)* Executive Summary (Offenses Committed On or After October 1, 1998), Florida Department of Corrections, available at [http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/sg\\_annual/1213/executives.html](http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/sg_annual/1213/executives.html) (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Offenses are either ranked in the offense severity level ranking chart in s. 921.0022, F.S., or are ranked by default based on a ranking assigned to the felony degree of the offense as provided in s. 921.0023, F.S.

<sup>13</sup> Section 921.0024, F.S. Unless otherwise noted, information on the Code is from this source.

<sup>14</sup> The court may "mitigate" or "depart downward" from the scored lowest permissible sentence if the court finds a mitigating circumstance. Section 921.0026, F.S., provides a list of mitigating circumstances.

<sup>15</sup> If the scored lowest permissible sentence exceeds the maximum penalty in s. 775.082, F.S., the sentence required by the Code must be imposed. If total sentence points are greater than or equal to 363 points, the court may sentence the offender to life imprisonment. Section 921.0024(2), F.S.

<sup>16</sup> Fla. R. Crim. P. 3.704(d)(26).

Code is generally the scored lowest permissible sentence up to and including the statutory maximum penalty. However, if there is a mandatory minimum sentence that is longer than the scored lowest permissible sentence, the sentencing range is narrowed to the mandatory minimum sentence up to and including the statutory maximum penalty.

Prosecutors have “complete discretion” in the charging decision.<sup>17</sup> The exercise of this discretion may determine whether or not a defendant is subject to a mandatory minimum term or a reduced mandatory minimum term. A prosecutor could determine in a particular case that mandatory minimum sentencing is inappropriate or too severe and avoid or ameliorate such sentencing. For example, the prosecutor could offer a plea to a violation of s. 893.13, F.S., or attempted drug trafficking, neither of which carries a mandatory minimum term. A prosecutor could also offer a plea to a drug trafficking violation that carries a 3-year mandatory minimum term, even though the defendant could be prosecuted for a drug trafficking violation that carries a greater mandatory minimum term. Further, a prosecutor could move the court to reduce or suspend a sentence if the defendant renders substantial assistance.<sup>18</sup>

There are few circumstances in which a court of its own accord can depart from a mandatory minimum term. A court may depart from a mandatory minimum term if the defendant is a youthful offender.<sup>19</sup> A court may also depart from a mandatory minimum term for a violation s. 316.027(2)(c), F.S. (driver involved in a fatal crash fails to stop and remain at the scene of a crash) if the court “finds that a factor, consideration or circumstance clearly demonstrates that imposing a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment would constitute or result in an injustice.”<sup>20</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill authorizes a court to depart from the 3-year mandatory minimum term of imprisonment applicable to trafficking in various controlled substances, excluding opioids and opiates. The departure is authorized if the court makes written findings that the violation only involved possession and that a factor, consideration, or circumstance clearly demonstrates that imposing the mandatory minimum term would constitute or result in an injustice. Therefore, the court may not depart from the mandatory minimum term if the drug trafficking violation involves sale, purchase, manufacture, delivery, or importation of a controlled substance.

The departure authorized by the bill is substantially similar to the departure currently authorized under s. 316.027, F.S. As previously noted, a court may depart from a mandatory minimum term

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<sup>17</sup> “Under Florida’s constitution, the decision to charge and prosecute is an executive responsibility, and the state attorney has complete discretion in deciding whether and how to prosecute.” *State v. Bloom*, 497 So.2d 2, 3 (Fla. 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Sections 790.163(2), 790.164(2), 893.135(4), and 921.0024(1)(b), F.S. However, lower-level dealers or peripheral actors may have little, if any, information beneficial to prosecutors. Inmate population data reported in a 2009 Senate interim report indicated that the average sentence of inmates with a lower-level trafficking offense was above the mandatory minimum term, while the average sentence of inmates with a higher-level trafficking offense was below the mandatory minimum term. *A Policy Analysis of Minimum Mandatory Sentencing for Drug Traffickers*, Interim Report 2010-109 (October 2009), p. 7, Committee on Criminal Justice, The Florida Senate, [http://archive.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2010/Senate/reports/interim\\_reports/pdf/2010-109cj.pdf](http://archive.flsenate.gov/data/Publications/2010/Senate/reports/interim_reports/pdf/2010-109cj.pdf) (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

<sup>19</sup> Section 958.04, F.S.

<sup>20</sup> Section 316.027(2)(g), F.S.

for a violation s. 316.027(2)(c), F.S. (driver involved in a fatal crash fails to stop and remain at the scene of a crash) if the court “finds that a factor, consideration or circumstance clearly demonstrates that imposing a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment would constitute or result in an injustice.”<sup>21</sup>

The bill impacts trafficking in specified quantities of the following controlled substances:

- In excess of 25 pounds, but less than 2,000 pounds of cannabis, or 300 or more cannabis plants, but not more than 2,000 cannabis plants;<sup>22</sup>
- 28 grams or more, but less than 200 grams, of cocaine;<sup>23</sup>
- 28 grams or more, but less than 200 grams, of phencyclidine;<sup>24</sup>
- 200 grams or more, but less than 5 kilograms, of methaqualone;<sup>25</sup>
- 14 grams or more, but less than 28 grams, of amphetamine or methamphetamine;<sup>26</sup>
- 4 grams or more, but less than 14 grams, of flunitrazepam;<sup>27</sup>
- 1 kilogram or more, but less than 5 kilograms, of gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB);<sup>28</sup>
- 1 kilogram or more, but less than 5 kilograms, of gamma-butyrolactone (GBL);<sup>29</sup>
- 1 kilogram or more, but less than 5 kilograms, of 1,4-Butanediol;<sup>30</sup>
- 10 grams or more, but less than 200 grams, of specified phenethylamines and cathinones, substituted<sup>31</sup> phenethylamines, and substituted cathinones;<sup>32</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> Section 893.135(1)(a)1., F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 893.135(1)(b)1.a., F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 893.135(1)(d)1.a., F.S. Phencyclidine “is a hallucinogen formerly used as a veterinary anesthetic, and briefly as a general anesthetic for humans.” “Phencyclidine,” PubChem, U.S. National Library of Medicine, <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/phencyclidine> (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Section 893.135(1)(e)1.a., F.S. Methaqualone “is a quinazoline derivative with hypnotic and sedative properties.” “Methaqualone,” PubChem, U.S. National Library of Medicine, <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/6292> (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Section 893.135(1)(f)1.a., F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 893.135(1)(g)1.a., F.S. “Flunitrazepam, trade name Rohypnol, is a central nervous system depressant in a class of drugs called benzodiazepines.” “Flunitrazepam (Rohypnol),” Center for Substance Abuse Research, <http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/drugs/rohypnol.asp> (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Section 893.135(1)(h)1.a., F.S. “Gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) is a naturally occurring analog of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) that has been used in research and clinical medicine for many years. GHB was used clinically as an anesthetic in the 1960s but was withdrawn due to side effects that included seizures and coma.” Kapoor P., Revati Deshmukh R., and Kukreja I., “GHB Acid: A rage or reprove” (abstract) (Oct.–Dec. 2013) 4(4): 173, *Journal of Advanced Pharmaceutical Technology and Research*, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3853692/> (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017). “The primary effects of GHB use are those of a CNS [central nervous system] depressant[.]” *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> Section 893.135(1)(i)1.a., F.S. “Analogues that are often substituted for GHB include GBL (gamma butyrolactone) and 1,4 BD (also called just “BD”), which is 1,4-butanediol.” “Drug Fact Sheet/GHB” (undated), U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (on file with the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice).

<sup>30</sup> Section 893.135(1)(j)1.a., F.S. Supra n. 29.

<sup>31</sup> “The term ‘substituted’ is a general term that means a portion of the chemical structure is removed and replaced with a different chemical structure.” Staff Analysis (CS/CS/CS/SB 150) (April 27, 2017), p. 11, n. 58, The Florida Senate, <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2017/150/Analyses/2017s00150.ap.PDF> (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Section 893.135(1)(k)2.a., F.S. “Phenethylamines” is a broad category of “psychoactive substances.” Sanders B., Lankenau S., Bloom J., and Hathazi D., “‘Research chemicals’: Tryptamine and Phenethylamine Use Among High Risk Youth” (2008) 43(3-4): 389, *Substance Use & Misuse*, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2536767/> (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017). “Cathinone ... is a monoamine alkaloid found in the shrub *Catha edulis* (Khat)[.]” and is “[c]losely related to ephedrine, cathine and other amphetamines[.]” “Cathinone,” PubChem, U.S. National Library of Medicine, <https://pubchem.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/compound/Cathinone#section=Top> (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

- 1 gram or more, but less than 5 grams, of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD);<sup>33</sup>
- 280 grams or more, but less than 500 grams, of specified synthetic cannabinoids;<sup>34</sup> and
- 14 grams or more, but less than 100 grams, of n-benzyl phenethylamines.<sup>35</sup>

Except for cannabis, mixtures containing the above-referenced controlled substances are included.

Excluded from the departure provisions of the bill are trafficking in various opiates or opioids, such as opium, morphine, heroin, hydromorphone, codeine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, fentanyl, and carfentanil and other fentanyl derivatives.<sup>36</sup>

The bill does not authorize departure from mandatory fines.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2018.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

##### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

##### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

##### **D. Other Constitutional Issues:**

The bill does not provide for retroactive application. Consequently, drug trafficking departures authorized by the bill would apply to applicable drug trafficking offenses committed on or after July 1, 2018, the effective date of the bill. “In Florida, without clear legislative intent to the contrary, a law is presumed to apply prospectively.”<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, Article X, Section 9 of the Florida Constitution, provides that repeal or amendment of a criminal statute shall not affect prosecution or punishment for any crime

<sup>33</sup> Section 893.135(1)(l)1.a., F.S.

<sup>34</sup> Section 893.135(1)(m)2.a., F.S. “Synthetic [c]annabinoids are chemicals that act as cannabinoid receptor agonists. Chemically they are not similar to cannabinoids but ... they are cannabinoid-like in their activity.” “Synthetic Cannabinoids Drug Information,” Redwood Toxicology Laboratory, [https://www.redwoodtoxicology.com/resources/drug\\_info/synthetic\\_cannabinoids](https://www.redwoodtoxicology.com/resources/drug_info/synthetic_cannabinoids) (last visited on Nov. 6, 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Section 893.135(1)(n)2.a., F.S. Supra n. 32.

<sup>36</sup> These controlled substances are described in s. 893.135(1)(c), F.S.

<sup>37</sup> *Bates v. State*, 750 So.2d 6, 10 (Fla. 1999) (in the absence of explicit legislative direction, the court refused to retroactively apply amendments to a sentencing statute to offenses committed before the effective date of the amendments).

previously committed.<sup>38</sup> This prohibition applies even if the retroactive application does not disadvantage the offender.<sup>39</sup>

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference, which provides the final, official estimate of the prison bed impact, if any, of legislation has not yet reviewed the bill. The Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research's (EDR) preliminary estimates that the bill will have a "negative indeterminate" prison bed impact (an unquantifiable decrease in prison beds).<sup>40</sup>

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 893.135 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

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<sup>38</sup> This constitutional provision operates as a savings clause to preserve laws in effect at the time of a defendant's crime that affect prosecution or punishment of the defendant for that crime.

<sup>39</sup> See *Castle v. State*, 305 So.2d 794, 796 (Fla. 4th DCA 1974), *affirmed*, 330 So.2d 10 (Fla. 1976) (Florida's saving clause prohibits retroactive application of a reduced penalty for arson to a defendant sentenced under the pre-amended arson statute).

<sup>40</sup> E-mail from EDR staff to staff of the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice, dated Nov. 3, 2017 (on file with the Senate Committee on Criminal Justice).

B. Amendments:

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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