

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 119 Visiting County and Municipal Detention Facilities

SPONSOR(S): Benjamin and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** CS/SB 1510

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 110 Y's 0 N's **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

HB 119 passed the House on April 13, 2023, and subsequently passed the Senate on May 1, 2023.

Florida's correctional system includes state-run correctional institutions, county and municipal detention facilities, and state juvenile facilities. State correctional institutions are overseen by the Department of Corrections (DOC), whereas county and municipal detention facilities are under the management and supervision of the county or municipality or a designated county or municipal officer or body. State juvenile facilities are funded and managed through collaboration between the state and local governments.

State facilities, including juvenile facilities, permit certain individuals and public officials to visit at their pleasure. Specifically, the Governor, Cabinet members, members of the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate, and other specified persons, may visit any state correctional facility without notice. However, for visitation of a state juvenile facility, the visit must take place between 6 a.m. and 11 p.m. unless a request for an after-hours visit has been approved.

Currently, there is no comparable right of visitation for the same specified persons at county and municipal detention facilities. If a public official wants to visit a county or municipal detention facility, he or she must do so under the rules and regulations established by the county or municipality or by the designated county or municipal officer or body.

The bill creates s. 951.225, F.S., to authorize the following persons, who are elected or appointed to serve the county or municipality in which the county or municipal detention facility is located, to visit such facility at their pleasure:

- Members of the governing body of the county or municipality.
- Members of the Legislature.
- State court judges.
- The state attorney.
- The public defender.
- The regional counsel.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local government.

The bill was approved by the Governor on June 13, 2023, ch. 2023-232, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2023.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Background

Detention Facilities

The Department of Corrections (DOC) oversees the supervision and custody of inmates and all buildings, grounds, property, and other matters relating to the imprisonment, correction, and rehabilitation of adult offenders.¹ The primary types of detention centers are state correctional institutions, commonly referred to as “prisons,” and county or municipal detention facilities, commonly referred to as “jails.” Generally, inmates in county or municipal detention facilities are housed in the facility for up to one year and state correctional institutions or prisons are used for housing inmates for longer than one year.

State Facilities

A state correctional institution is any temporary or permanent prison, road camp, prison industry, prison forestry camp, or any prison camp or prison farm or other correctional facility in which prisoners are housed, worked, or maintained under the custody and jurisdiction of DOC.² Section 944.23, F.S., authorizes specific persons to visit state correctional institutions at their pleasure, including:

- The Governor.
- Cabinet members.
- Members of the Legislature.
- State court judges.
- State attorneys.
- Public defenders.
- Authorized representatives of the Florida Commission on Offender Review.³

Currently, no other person may be permitted to enter or visit a state correctional institution except under regulations prescribed by DOC.⁴ Permission to enter a state correctional facility may not be unreasonably withheld from bona fide reporters or writers.⁵

County and Municipal Detention Facilities

A county detention facility is a county jail, county stockade, county work camp, county residential probation center, and any other place except a municipal detention facility used by a county or county officer for the detention of persons charged with or convicted of a felony or misdemeanor.⁶ Each county sheriff’s office or board of county commissioners may establish the visitation rules for its respective detention facilities, including, but not limited to, who may be authorized to visit, visitation hours, dress codes, and admission requirements.⁷

¹ S. 945.025(1), F.S.

² S. 944.02(8), F.S.

³ The Florida Commission on Offender Review is a quasi-judicial body that presides over hearings on post release decisions affecting inmates and ex-offenders throughout the state. The Commission makes a variety of determinations regarding parole and other releases and reviews releasees’ supervision status every two years. Florida Commission on Offender Review, *Organization Overview*, <https://www.fcor.state.fl.us/overview.shtml> (last visited Feb. 7, 2023).

⁴ S. 944.23, F.S.

⁵ The terms “bona fide reporter” and “writer” are undefined in s. 944.23, F.S.

⁶ S. 951.23(1)(a), F.S.

⁷ For example, see Nassau County Sheriff’s Office, *Jail Visitation*, <https://nassauso.com/corrections/jail-visitation/> (last visited Feb. 7, 2023).

A municipal detention facility is a city jail, city stockade, city prison camp, and any other place except a county detention facility used by a municipality or municipal officer for the detention of persons charged with or convicted of a violation of municipal laws or ordinances.⁸

A county or municipality may also extend specific visitation rules for private attorneys, state attorneys, and public defenders.⁹ Under current law, there is no specific authorization for specified persons and officials to visit county or municipal detention facilities at their pleasure like there is for state correctional institutions.

Juvenile Facilities

A juvenile detention center or facility is a facility used pending court adjudication or disposition or execution of court order for the temporary care of a juvenile alleged or found to have committed a criminal offense.¹⁰ In 2018, the Legislature authorized specific individuals and public officials to visit all facilities housing juveniles under the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) or a county between the hours of 6 a.m. and 11 p.m.¹¹ The following persons are permitted to visit any juvenile facility during such specified hours:

- The Governor.
- Cabinet members.
- Members of the Legislature.
- State court judges.
- State attorneys.
- Public defenders.
- Persons authorized by the Secretary of DJJ.¹²

DJJ may not unreasonably withhold permission to visit a juvenile facility from a person who provides sufficient proof that he or she is a bona fide reporter or writer.¹³ Visitation may occur outside of the regularly established timeframe as necessary under rules adopted by DJJ.¹⁴

Effect of the Bill

The bill creates s. 951.225, F.S., to authorize the following persons, who are elected or appointed to serve the county or municipality in which the county or municipal detention facility is located, to visit such facility at their pleasure:

- Members of the governing body of the county or municipality.
- Members of the Legislature.
- State court judges.
- The state attorney.
- The public defender.
- The regional counsel.

The effective date of this bill is July 1, 2023.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

⁸ S. 951.23(1)(d), F.S.

⁹ For example, see Broward County Sheriff's Office, *Attorney Information*, <https://www.sheriff.org/DOD/Pages/Attorney-Info.aspx> (last visited Feb. 7, 2023).

¹⁰ S. 985.03(19), F.S.

¹¹ Ch. 2018-47, Laws of Fla.

¹² S. 985.6885, F.S.

¹³ S. 985.6885, F.S. This section does not define "bona fide reporter" or "writer."

¹⁴ See Florida DJJ, *Visitation*, <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/youth-families/visitation> (last visited Feb. 7, 2023).

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local government.