



BETTER JUSTICE FOR FLORIDA

Lowering Juvenile Recidivism Through Civil Citations

Background

Nearly 70,000 juvenile arrests were made in Florida in Fiscal Year 2015-2016 according to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). While some people think an arrest will steer a youthful offender onto the right path, the statistics tells a different story.

Fifteen percent of the juveniles who are arrested and receive supervised probation will be arrested again. For the most serious Florida juvenile offenders sent to a residential facility, the recidivism rate is three times that, or 45 percent. However, the recidivism rate for young offenders who receive civil citations and no arrest record is just 5 percent.

While civil citations are used in varying degrees across Florida, overall they were used only 43% of the time they could be used. Increased use would improve public safety by giving civil citations for non-violent, common youth misbehavior, law enforcement resources would be better used preventing and responding to serious felony offenses. Additionally, juveniles who pose little threat to public safety would no longer have arrest records, giving them more opportunity for education, employment, and civic engagement. In short, they have a better shot at getting back on track and leading productive lives.

Proposed Legislation

HB 205 / CS/SB 196: Juvenile Civil Citation and Similar Diversion Programs
Filed by HB 205 – Rep. Ahern CS/SB 196 – Criminal Justice & Sen. Flores

Summary

These bills would build on the existing and proven civil citation programs in many parts of the state by requiring each county in Florida to have at least one youth civil citation program and for all youth to be served by the civil citation program or programs in each county. The proposals would require law enforcement to issue civil citation for first-time offenders who commit low-level misdemeanor offenses – such as, possession of alcoholic beverages by persons under age 21, trespassing, theft, loitering or prowling, disorderly conduct, and possession of certain amounts of cannabis or controlled substances, instead of arresting juveniles for these offenses. Requiring the use of civil citations for first-time juvenile offenders would ensure that all Florida juveniles are afforded the same opportunity to avoid an arrest record and get back on track.

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Additional information and resources are available at www.BetterJusticeFL.com

General requests can be made at contact@betterjusticefl.com

Media requests can be made at media@betterjusticefl.com