



Fiscal Impact Statement for Proposed Legislation

Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission

House Bill No. 1550 (Patron – Iaquinto)

LD #: 13103020

Date: 12/27/2012

Topic: Expansion of gang-free zones

Fiscal Impact Summary:

- **State Adult Correctional Facilities:**
\$50,000 *
- **Local Adult Correctional Facilities:**
Cannot be determined
- **Adult Community Corrections Programs:**
Cannot be determined

- **Juvenile Correctional Centers:**
Cannot be determined
- **Juvenile Detention Facilities:**
Cannot be determined

* The estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 890 of the 2011 Acts of Assembly requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Summary of Proposed Legislation:

The proposal amends § 18.2-46.3:3 to designate school bus stops, and the surrounding 1,000 feet of such property that is open to public use, while children are awaiting school-related transportation, as gang-free zones. Persons prosecuted for gang activities taking place within these zones may be subject to enhanced penalties, including:

- a mandatory minimum sentence of two years for gang participation or gang activity (as defined in § 18.2-46.2) taking place on any of the properties described in § 18.2-46.3:3;
- a higher penalty for recruiting gang members (in violation of § 18.2-46.3(A)) on any of the properties described in § 18.2-46.3:3 (a Class 5 felony versus a Class 6 felony when a person over the age of 18 recruits a minor; a Class 6 felony versus a Class 1 misdemeanor in other cases); and
- a higher penalty for using or threatening to use force to encourage another person to become or remain a gang member or to commit a felony (in violation of § 18.2-46.3(B)) when the act is committed on any of the properties (a Class 5 felony versus a Class 6 felony).

Currently, § 18.2-46.3:3 provides for these penalty enhancements when gang activities take place on or within 1,000 feet of school property, on a school bus, or upon the grounds of a publicly owned or operated community center or recreation center.

All of the crimes in Article 2.1 (Crimes by Gangs) of Chapter 4 of Title 18.2 were created by the 2000 session of the General Assembly and enacted in July of the same year. Additions and other revisions were made by the 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, and 2012 General Assemblies.

Analysis:

According to the Circuit Court Case Management System (CCMS)¹ for fiscal years 2011 and 2012, two offenders were convicted under § 18.2-46.3:3 for participation in a criminal act to benefit a gang having a juvenile member in a gang-free zone (as the primary offense). While one offender did not receive an active term of incarceration, the other offender received a jail sentence of six months. One offender was convicted of gang participation in a gang-free zone as an additional offense. No other offenders were convicted under the penalty enhancements provided in § 18.2-46.3:3.

During the same two-year period, 15 offenders were convicted in circuit court under § 18.2-46.2 for participation in a criminal act to benefit a gang having a juvenile member, not in a gang-free zone (as the primary offense). Two-thirds (66.7%) of these offenders received a state-responsible (prison) term, for which the median sentence was 3.4 years. Another 26.7% of offenders received a local-responsible (jail) term with a median sentence of 12 months, while the remaining offender did not receive an active term of incarceration to serve. An additional 11 offenders were convicted of this gang crime as an additional offense to a more serious felony, such as robbery.

Fiscal year (FY) 2011 and FY2012 CCMS data also indicate that 44 offenders were convicted in circuit court of a felony under § 18.2-46.2 for participating in a criminal act to benefit a gang that does not have a juvenile member (as the primary offense). Most offenders (65.9%) received a state-responsible (prison) term with a median sentence of two years. Fewer offenders received a local-responsible (jail) term (18.2%), while the remaining offenders (15.9%) did not receive an active term of incarceration. Another 39 offenders were convicted of this gang crime as an additional offense accompanying a more serious felony.

During FY2011 and FY2012, one offender was convicted of a third or subsequent gang offense under § 18.2-46.3:1 as the primary offense and was sentenced to nine months in jail. One additional offender was convicted of a third or subsequent criminal street gang violation as an additional offense. Two offenders were convicted of a felony under § 18.2-46.3(A) for recruiting a juvenile for a street gang (as the primary offense). Both of these offenders received a jail sentence, with a median sentence of nine months. A felony violation of § 18.2-46.3(A) was an additional offense for one offender.

According to FY2011 and FY2012 General District Court Case Management System data, four offenders were convicted of a misdemeanor violation of § 18.2-46.3(A) for recruiting an adult for a gang. The gang conviction was the primary offense in all of the sentencing events. While three of the offenders received a local-responsible (jail) term of 12 months, one offender received a jail term of 36 months for all charges in the sentencing event.

Existing criminal justice databases are not sufficiently detailed to identify the number of gang-related crimes that take place within 1,000 feet of school bus stops while children are awaiting school-related transportation.

Impact of Proposed Legislation:

State adult correctional facilities. Since the proposal expands the applicability of mandatory minimum penalties and raises the punishment for gang activity in certain additional locations, it may increase the state-responsible (prison) bed space needs of the Commonwealth. However, data are not sufficiently detailed to identify how many gang-related violations take place in the locations specified by the proposal. Therefore, the magnitude of the impact cannot be determined.

¹ Formerly referred to as the Court Automated Information System (CAIS).

Local adult correctional facilities. For similar reasons, the proposal's impact on the local-responsible (jail) bed space needs of the Commonwealth cannot be determined.

Adult community corrections programs. The proposal's impact on the need for adult community corrections resources cannot be determined.

Virginia's sentencing guidelines. Convictions under § 18.2-46.3:3 are not covered by the sentencing guidelines as the primary (most serious) offense in a case; however, a conviction under this provision may augment the guidelines recommendation if the most serious offense at sentencing is covered by the guidelines. No adjustment to the guidelines would be necessary under the proposal.

Juvenile correctional centers. According to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the legislative proposal may have an impact on juvenile correctional center bed space needs. However, the actual impact on juvenile correctional center bed space needs cannot be determined.

Juvenile detention facilities. Similarly, while the legislative proposal may have an impact on juvenile detention bed space needs, the actual impact on juvenile detention facilities cannot be determined.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of imprisonment in state adult correctional facilities; therefore, Chapter 3 of the Acts of Assembly of 2012, Special Session I, requires the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission to assign a minimum fiscal impact of \$50,000.

Pursuant to § 30-19.1:4, the estimated amount of the necessary appropriation cannot be determined for periods of commitment to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

gang09_3020