



Florida Juvenile Justice Association

LEGISLATIVE ALERT

Week Six: April 11, 2014

Children's Week Takes Center Stage and Legislators Plan to Head Home to Districts

This week, children and child advocates from across Florida came to Tallahassee to celebrate the 19th annual Children's Week. Within Children's Week was DJJ Youth Success Day, with Secretary Walters and Executive Director Cathy Craig-Myers speaking at a Press Conference announcing the 2014 DJJ Youth Ambassadors. Five deserving youth from across the continuum of services were recognized and honored for their success.

Legislators prepared to head home for a week off for the Passover and Easter holidays, expecting that budget conference will begin on Monday, April 21, kicking off the final two weeks of session. The differences between the House and Senate budgets will be reconciled once allocations are finalized.

Within the public safety budget, where the DJJ budget is housed, both the Senate and House plan calls for a \$4.1B spending plan. The funding is an increase of \$290M greater than current year. DJJ started the fiscal year with a budget of \$518M. Currently, the Senate funds DJJ at \$551M and the House funds DJJ at \$543M. It is possible to see funding amounts increase as often happens in years with a budget surplus.

Also within the public safety budget, the House budget plan funds \$41M to DOC to pay down its current year deficit and provides another \$34.5M to handle projected increases male prison population. Guardian Ad Litem program would receive a \$6M increase. The Senate plan provides DOC with \$22M for prison population increases and \$17 million to open new work camps and re-entry centers.

Key Juvenile Justice Bills Headed for Final Passage

Two bills, priorities of both DJJ and FJJA are in the home stretch and hopefully will keep up the momentum in the final weeks when many bills often get stuck. The FJJA education bill, **SB598** by Sen. Aaron Bean (R-Fernandina Beach) passed unanimously by the Senate Education Appropriations Subcommittee on April 9 and now heads for its final stop, Appropriations. The House version, **HB173** sponsored by Rep. Janet Adkins (R-Fernandina Beach), was passed out unanimously by the full House on March 12.

Another priority, relating to the 985 rewrite, **HB7055** by the House Criminal Justice Subcommittee and Rep. Ray Pilon (R-Sarasota) was passed by its final committee, Judiciary, on March 27. The bill is still on the calendar on Second Reading. The Senate version, **SB700** by Sen. Rob Bradley (R-Fleming Island), is at the final committee stop, Senate Appropriations.

Other Bills of Interest

A solution addressing **Juvenile Detention** costs, **HB5305** by the House Justice Appropriations Subcommittee and Rep. Charles McBurney (R-Jacksonville) passed the full House on a 100 to 11 vote on April 3. The bill will establish a new 50/50 percent cost sharing formula agreeable by the counties, as well as a "payback" formula for overpayments over many years. The Senate version, **SB1532** by Sen. Rob Bradley (R-Orange Park) is currently awaiting a hearing in its final committee, Senate Appropriations.

Three Senate bills relating to reforming the **Child Welfare System** have been rolled into **SB1666**. The House version, **HB7169** by the Healthy Families Committee, remains in the House Appropriations Committee. Many applaud the goals of the legislation, however concerns remain relative to any failure to appropriate funding necessary to improve the services required in the legislation.

One of the most debated bills relate to commercial sex exploitation of youth, and a revisiting of the "Safe Harbor" Act passed last year. This week the Senate Appropriations Committee passed **SB1724** at the same time removing language for a "secure safe house" pilot program. Advocates successfully argued that a secure facility would further traumatize victimized youth. Following the language removal, the bill was unanimously passed. The House version, **HB7141** by the House Healthy Families Committee, passed the Health Care Appropriations and the Health and Human Services Committee this week. The House version was also amended, removing the "secure safe house" provision. **HB7141** is now on its way to the House floor. Added to the bill is the commission of an OPPAGA study to track victims as they move through the recovery process.