

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
MONTANA STATE SENATE

April 15, 1987

The meeting of the Senate Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee was called to order by Chairman Dorothy Eck on April 15, 1987, at 1:00 P.M. in Room 410 of the State Capitol.

ROLL CALL: All members of the committee were present except for senator Rassmussen.

CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 627: Rep. Bill Strizich, District # 41, sponsor of the bill, stated that the purpose of the bill is to deal with a concern that everyone has over troubled youths and the places where their needs are evaluated. Currently, there is a separate youth evaluation program at Great Falls, but most youth evaluations are done at state institutions such as Pine Hills and even adult jails. Use of adult jails is against Federal regulations, the American Sheriff's standards, American Bar Association standards, and other organizations. Public officials are facing liability risks by continuing to do evaluations in some of these institutions. A 1983 study recommends that these evaluations should not be done at any institutions at all. In the formal institutions, temporary children there for evaluation are very disruptive to those there for longer-term treatment, while top offenders are a very negative influence on youths being evaluated in jails. The evaluation process also needs to evaluate how the children's family unit operates, and in Montana the children are being sent too far away. In addition, Pine Hills and Mountain View are overcrowded. Great Falls currently has a facility with a family type area and a secure area, and its use needs to be continued. Subject to available funding, the bill calls for two additional youth evaluation homes to be geographically strategically located and which would provide both family settings and secure areas, often to protect the youths from themselves. These treatment centers would allow for more effective care of our youth.

PROPOSERS: Steve Nelson, Board of Crime Control, stated that the bill came about because of the Federal Juvenile Detention Act, which prevents holding of youths in adult jails. In Oregon, a federal judge found that adult jails are inappropriate places to hold youth; and counties and cities across the nation are no longer planning to hold juveniles in county jails. Montana has a 90% reduction of youths held in jails in the last fifteen years. The option is available to combine detention centers with shelter care. There are as least twenty juveniles at any one time going through evaluation and five are in jail going through evaluation.

Gene Huntington, Governor's Office (appearing for Curt Chisholm), stated that the bill is consistent with other governor's programs, which try to base these programs in the communities.

There were no opponents to the bill.

DISCUSSION OF H.B. 627: Sen. Williams: Do you have a cost figure for Line 6?

Rep. Strizich: No, but we would probably be remodeling a home, and the cost would be for the security.

Sen. Williams: Where would these centers be located?

Rep. Strizich: That hasn't been decided yet. One would probably be in Great Falls, since the one is there now, and the other toward the eastern part of the state. If the drug tax bill goes through, the funds from that would be used for this.

Sen. Eck: Are any of the juveniles in traditional foster care?

Rep. Strizich: Some are. The youth guidance centers are also used for delinquent youth; kids on detention and kids just running away are mixed together, and that can be rather inappropriate. The Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch no longer does evaluations.

Sen. Himsl: Couldn't this evaluation be done on a contracted basis with psychologists, etc?

Rep. Strizich: The evaluations are done now on a contracted basis, but the centers are needed and they need a funded support staff.

Sen. Eck: Even Rivendell would not be appropriate for evaluation.

Rep. Strizich: No, these kids have other kinds of disturbances, and those kids at Rivendell can be very out of touch with reality. Most of the current homes are requiring that an evaluation be done before any new juvenile comes into a particular home.

Sen. Eck: If you add a secure area to an existing facility, what facility would you use?

Rep. Strizich: We are looking to build or remodel a home with a secure area.

Sen. Eck: How many can Great Falls handle now?

Rep. Strizich: Eight youths.

Sen. Himsl: How long would the support staff be on?

Rep. Strizich: The evaluation center would have a 24-hour awake staff to supervise the kids, although the building is not to be a jail for children. A staff in a regular shelter also sleeps.

Sen. Eck: Is there available funding?

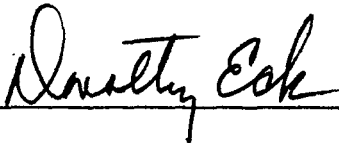
Rep. Strizich: H.B. 791 would provide funding and it is now on the Governor's desk.

Rep. Strizich stated in closing that in order to accommodate Montana's small size, detention and evaluation centers could be combined because they provide short term, non-elaborate care. This would be a giant step in the right direction and would keep juveniles out of jails.

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ACTION ON H.B. 627: Sen. Norman moved that H.B. 627 BE CONCURRED
IN. The motion carried, with Sen. Himsl voting no. He stated
that he would like to see how the family youth service program
works. Sen. Halligan will carry the bill.

The meeting adjourned at 2:00 P.M.



CHAIRMAN

ROLL CALL

Public Health, Welfare and Safety COMMITTEE

50th LEGISLATIVE SESSION -- 1987

Date 4-15-87

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
Dorothy Eck	X		
Bill Norman	X		
Bob Williams	X		
Darryl Meyer	X		
Eleanor Vaughn	X		
Tom Rasmussen			
Judy Jacobson	X		
Harry H. "Doc" McLane	X		
Matt Himsl	X		
Tom Hager	X		

Each day attach to minutes.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

APRIL 16

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MR. PRESIDENT

We, your committee on SENATE PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY

having had under consideration HOUSE BILL No. 627

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CREATE TWO YOUTH EVALUATION PROGRAMS

STRIZICH (HALLIGAN)

Respectfully report as follows: That HOUSE BILL No. 627

BE CONCURRED IN

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DOROTHY ECK

Chairman.