

SUBJECT: State aid for juvenile county residential care facilities

COMMITTEE: Juvenile Justice and Family Issues — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Goodman, Cook, Brady, H. Cuellar, De La Garza, Naishtat, Puente, Van de Putte, Williamson
0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 20 — voice vote

WITNESSES: For — Lloyd Watts
Against — None

DIGEST: SB 384 would require the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission (TJPC) to provide state aid to counties that provide residential care in a secure facility for juvenile offenders out of the funds appropriated to TJPC. TJPC would adopt standards for the provision of state aid and would monitor its effectiveness. The state aid would be in addition to state aid provided by TJPC for other services or facilities.

In addition, a portion of the state aid appropriated to TJPC under this section would have to be used to establish juvenile boot camps in five regions of the state as designated by TJPC. The bill would take effect September 1, 1995.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 384 would help support local alternative commitment facilities for delinquent youth who are placed in the facilities as an alternative to commitment to the Texas Youth Commission (TYC). The bill would improve the quality of those services by allocating state aid and developing minimum standards. Support of local facilities would not only improve the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders but also would help relieve overcrowding in TYC facilities.

Twelve counties currently provide secure facilities and rehabilitation programs for juvenile offenders. These facilities are usually less costly and more effective than TYC facilities because of their reliance on available

community services, such as counselors and schools, and because of their proximity to family members of the offenders. Local residential facilities have lower overhead expenses than TYC facilities and can better integrate youth into normal society and work with affected families.

If the Legislature appropriates the funds, and the operations of the 12 current local juvenile detention centers are fully funded, SB 384 could provide as much as \$19.5 million in state aid to the counties in the next two years. State funding of operational expenses for these facilities would benefit all of the counties that use the facilities. In addition, the bill would complement the construction bond funds of \$37.5 million allocated in the appropriations bill to construct regional facilities in counties not being served adequately by the existing local facilities. Once in operation, those facilities would also be eligible for operational funds.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 384 would require TJPC to provide state aid for local secure residential care facilities, but does not condition that provision on an appropriation. TJPC's responsibilities would be unclear if an appropriation were not made. TJPC might be required to divert money from other programs to the residential care facilities. Even if funds are appropriated, the lack of guidelines for distribution of the money could result in inequitable funding of the facilities.

In addition, the bill might set an inappropriate precedent for state funding of operational expenses that are usually funded at the local level. The bill would favor residential care facilities in existence over the counties that should be receiving the money to construct facilities for their local needs.

NOTES:

The fiscal note estimates that, if funded, SB 384's provisions could result in a state cost of about \$9.7 million annually.