

ASSEMBLY LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 1458

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 3, 1997

The Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Bill No. 1458.

Assembly Bill No. 1458, the "Juvenile Offender Rehabilitation Act," permits counties to establish "boot camps" for juvenile offenders.

Under the provisions of the bill as amended and released by the committee, the governing body of any county, or the governing bodies of two or more counties, may establish and maintain a boot camp for juvenile offenders. These boot camps, which use regimentation and structured discipline, coupled with substantial counseling and aftercare or mentoring services, have been shown to develop positive attitudes and behavior traits in juvenile offenders and dramatically improve a juvenile offender's potential for rehabilitation and re-integration into the community.

While the counties would have significant latitude in the operation of these camps, the bill does specify that the camps should consist of a residential phase for a minimum of four weeks during which the offender is subjected to highly structured routines of discipline, physical exercise, work and various types of counseling, including vocational, educational, personal development and, if appropriate, substance abuse counseling. This residential phase is to be followed by a six to nine month aftercare or mentoring program pursuant to which the juvenile will receive additional counseling and assistance.

Juvenile offenders may be recommended for the program by their sentencing judge or, if incarcerated in another facility, apply for admission. After successful completion of the program, the sentencing judge would determine whether the juvenile should be placed on parole. A juvenile who fails to comply with the requirements of the program is to be placed in the custody of the Juvenile Justice Commission and assigned to another facility to fulfill his term of incarceration. An offender who fails to complete the program or is removed from the program is permanently barred from re-admission.

Finally, the bill provides that these programs are deemed to be education programs and would be funded by State aid from the

proceeds of the State lottery.

The committee amended the bill to provide that a juvenile offender would participate in the residential phase of the program for a minimum of four weeks. As introduced, this phase was to be four to six weeks. The amendments also delete the requirement that the juvenile offender undergo psychological counseling. The amendments also provide that any juvenile under the age of 18 would be eligible for the program; as introduced, the bill provided that the juvenile must be at least 14, but no more than 18. The amendments further provide that the juvenile offender request admission to the program in the county where he resides; as introduced, the bill provided that the offender request admission to the program in the county of incarceration. Prior to being amended by the committee, the bill provided that a juvenile who successfully completed the program was absolved of any parole obligations. The amendments require the sentencing judge to determine whether the juvenile should be required to serve parole. The committee also amended the bill to add placement in a county boot camp as an appropriate disposition for the court to make under section 24 of P.L.1982, c.77 (C.2A:4A-43) when adjudicating a juvenile. Other committee amendments are clarifying and technical in nature.

As reported by the committee, this bill is identical to Senate Bill 454 (1R).