



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

SB 195 – Juvenile Law – Arrest by Law Enforcement – Report to Local Department of Social Services

POSITION: Favorable with Amendment

BY: Linda Kohn, President

Date: February 13, 2024

The League of Women Voters supports a juvenile justice system that has options to provide counseling services geared to dealing with families, individually designed training and treatment programs, local or regional diagnostic services for juvenile offenders, and coordination of programs and services for juvenile offenders provided by the state agencies. Early intervention and prevention measures are most effective in addressing the needs of juvenile offenders.

This bill mandates the reporting of certain younger juvenile offenders to the local Department of Social Services. This should initiate a process that will ensure that appropriate services are provided. We note, however, that some local law enforcement systems may have other programs that may be equally or more effective in addressing the needs of these younger offenders. We encourage the adoption of an amendment to permit more flexibility in the implementation of this requirement.

We note also that the referrals mandated by this legislation will increase the workload of the local Departments of Social Services affected. Many of these agencies struggle with a lack of resources to provide the services needed. Referrals to an agency that cannot provide the needed services will be counterproductive. Accordingly, we urge the members of the Committee to support adequate funding for these agencies.

We urge the Committee to give a favorable report on SB 195 as amended.