
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 1542

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF HANDCUFFS ON YOUNG CHILDREN.

SUMMARY

This bill generally prohibits using handcuffs to restrain children under age 14 who have not been adjudicated, beginning at the point of initial contact with a police officer.

The bill makes exceptions when handcuffing is:

1. necessary for public safety,
2. necessary because the child is using or threatening to use physical force on a police officer who is engaging with the child, or
3. ordered by the court under its existing policy on using mechanical restraints in court (see BACKGROUND).

The bill also makes a corresponding change in the law that required the court to develop its policy on using mechanical restraints in court, by replacing the term “juvenile” with the term “child.”

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025

BACKGROUND

Judicial Branch Policy on Using Mechanical Restraints in Juvenile Courts

The judicial branch policy, which existing law authorizes, establishes a presumption that mechanical restraints (including handcuffs) will be removed from a juvenile prior to and throughout his or her appearance in juvenile court. Under the policy, in-court restraints may be used only following a judge’s order in accordance with the policy.

The policy requires a Court Support Services Division officer to complete a form before transporting a juvenile to the juvenile court. On the form, the officer must indicate whether restraints are recommended and, if so, the types. The policy specifies factors that must be present to support using these restraints (e.g., whether the juvenile has threatened or attempted to escape or is charged with a class A felony).

If the juvenile's lawyer or other parties disagree with the recommendation, they may address the court before the juvenile appears in court. After hearing from all parties, the judge determines which restraints, if any, are appropriate.

Any restraints removed under this policy must be immediately reapplied after the court hearing, in a secure area outside the courtroom.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 33 Nay 6 (04/10/2025)