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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
151st GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE BILL NO. 115

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 10 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO JUVENILE PROSECUTION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

1 Section 1. Amend § 921, Chapter 9 of Title 10 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike
2 through and insertions as shown by underline as follows:

3 § 921 Exclusive original civil jurisdiction.

4 The Court shall have exclusive original civil jurisdiction in all proceedings in this State concerning:

5 (1) Any child found in the State who is alleged to be dependent, neglected, abused or delinquent except as
6 otherwise provided in this chapter;

7 (2)a. Any child charged in this State with delinquency by having committed any act or violation of any laws
8 of this State or any subdivision thereof, except, for a child aged 16 or older accused of murder in the first degree, ~~or~~
9 murder in the second degree, rape in the first degree, rape in the second degree, unlawful sexual intercourse in the first
10 degree, assault in the first degree, robbery in the first degree, (where such offense involves the display of what appears
11 to be a deadly weapon or involves the representation by word or conduct that the person was in possession or control of
12 a deadly weapon or involves the infliction of serious physical injury upon any person who was not a participant in the
13 crime, and where the child has previously been adjudicated delinquent of 1 or more offenses which would constitute a
14 felony were the child charged under the laws of this State), kidnapping in the first degree, or any attempt to commit
15 said crimes; any child 16 years of age or older charged with violation of Title 21, except as provided in paragraph (16)
16 of this section or § 927 of this title; or any other crime over which the General Assembly has granted or may grant
17 jurisdiction to another court.

18 Section 2. Amend § 1002, Chapter 9 of Title 10 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike
19 through and insertions as shown by underline as follows:

20 § 1002. Delinquent child not criminal; prosecution limited.

21 (a) Except as provided in § 1010 of this title, no child shall be deemed a criminal by virtue of an allegation or
22 adjudication of delinquency, nor shall a child be charged with or prosecuted for a crime in any other court. In this Court the
23 nature of the hearing and all other proceedings shall be in the interest of rather than against the child. Except as otherwise
24 provided, there shall be no proceedings other than appellate proceedings in any court other than this Court in the interest of
25 a child alleged to be dependent, neglected, or delinquent.

26 (b)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, no child shall be prosecuted for a crime or act
27 of delinquency arising from conduct that occurred when the child was under the age of ~~10~~ 12, except for a child under the
28 age of 12 accused of murder in the first degree, murder in the second degree, rape in the first degree, rape in the second
29 degree, or accused of using, displaying, or discharging a firearm during the commission of a Title 11 or a Title 31 violent
30 felony as set forth in § 4201 (c) of Title 11.

31 a. A child younger than 12 accused of murder in the first degree, murder in the second degree, rape in the
32 first degree, or rape in the second degree, or accused of using, displaying, or discharging a firearm during the
33 commission of a Title 11 or a Title 31 violent felony set forth in § 4201(c) of Title 11, may not be prosecuted
34 unless the delinquency petition includes a motion to determine competency pursuant § 1007A of this title. If the
35 Court finds the child competent, prosecution of the case may resume at the discretion of the State. If the Court
36 finds the child not competent the Court shall, contemporaneous with the entry of such finding, enter a dismissal of
37 the charge or charges, and the State shall petition the Court to expunge the instant record of arrest as set forth in §
38 1018(f) of this title.

39 b. Notwithstanding subsection (b)(1) of this section, a child younger than 12 may be prosecuted if such
40 child is accused of a title 11 violent felony or misdemeanor crime of violence and the delinquency petition
41 includes a motion to determine competency pursuant § 1007A of this title. If the Court finds the child competent,
42 prosecution of the case may resume at the discretion of the State. If the Court finds the child not competent the
43 Court shall, contemporaneous with the entry of such finding, enter a dismissal of the charge or charges, and the
44 State shall petition the Court to expunge the instant record of arrest as set forth in § 1018(f) of this title.

45 (2) A child under the age of ~~10~~ 12 may be referred to and required to participate in any pre or ~~post~~ arrest
46 diversionary program administered by the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services, and such child may be referred to
47 the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health, the Division of Family Services, or any other state agency if the
48 child is believed to be abused, neglected, dependent or otherwise in need of services. Notwithstanding any provisions
49 to the contrary, referrals under this subsection shall not preclude subsequent participation in any pre or post arrest
50 diversionary programs for which the child is eligible upon reaching age 12.

51 (3) A child under the age of 12, who could otherwise be charged with a Title 11 violent felony or a
52 misdemeanor crime of violence if the child were 12 or older, shall be referred to the Juvenile Civil Citation Program
53 under this title. Such child shall be assessed for appropriate programs and services available through the Department of
54 Services for Children, Youth and Their Families. Referrals and participation in the Juvenile Civil Citation Program,
55 shall not preclude subsequent participation in any pre or post arrest diversionary programs for which the child is
56 otherwise eligible upon reaching the age of 12.

57 Section 3. Amend § 1004A, Chapter 9 of Title 10 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike
58 through, insertions as shown by underline and redesignating as follows:

59 § 1004A Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program [Effective July 1, 2019]

60 (a) There is hereby established a juvenile offender civil citation option to provide a civil alternative to arrest and
61 criminal prosecution for eligible youth who have committed ~~minor misdemeanor~~ acts of delinquency as set forth herein.
62 The Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program shall be coordinated by a statewide Civil Citation Coordinator within the
63 Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services and shall include assessment and intervention services that a juvenile voluntarily
64 agrees to complete in lieu of formal arrest and prosecution.

65 (b)(1) Referral to the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program shall be initiated by a peace officer through the
66 issuance of a civil citation. Any peace officer having reasonable grounds to believe that a juvenile has committed or
67 attempted to commit ~~a misdemeanor~~ an act of delinquency described hereunder may issue the juvenile a civil citation. The
68 issuance of a civil citation shall be at the discretion of the peace officer and limited to qualified juvenile offenders.
69 Participation in the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program is voluntary on the part of the juvenile offender and requires
70 parental consent. Other than referrals under § 1002, referral ~~Referral~~ to the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program shall
71 be made with the consent of the victim if one exists.

72 (2) An act of delinquency classified as a misdemeanor is eligible for disposition pursuant to a civil citation,
73 except any Title 21 misdemeanor, unlawful sexual contact in violation of § 767 of Title 11, and unlawful imprisonment
74 second degree in violation of § 781 of Title 11. Juveniles under the age of 12 shall also be eligible for disposition
75 pursuant to a civil citation based on referrals under § 1002 of this title.

76 (3) For purposes of this section, a "qualified juvenile offender" means a juvenile who meets both of the
77 following:

- 78 a. No prior adjudication of delinquency.
- 79 b. No prior referral to the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation or any other diversion program unless more
80 than 1 year has elapsed since the first referral and the prior referral was for a different offense.

81 (c) A civil citation shall be initiated by entering all required information into the Law Enforcement Investigative
82 Support System (LEISS) to include a description of the ~~misdemeanor~~ offense believed to have been committed; contact
83 information for the designated civil citation community providers; notification that the juvenile must contact the identified
84 civil citation community provider within 7 business days to schedule their intake and initial assessment; and a warning that
85 failure to contact the identified civil citation community provider may result in the juvenile's arrest and the commencement
86 of delinquency proceedings as otherwise provided in this subchapter.

87 (d) At the time of issuance of a civil citation by the peace officer, the peace officer shall advise the juvenile that
88 the juvenile has the option to refuse the civil citation and instead be taken into custody and subject to arrest and prosecution
89 as otherwise provided in this subchapter. Upon issuance of a civil citation, the peace officer shall submit the civil citation
90 through LEISS to the Civil Citation Coordinator.

91 (e) A juvenile issued a civil citation shall contact the identified civil citation community provider within 7
92 business days or as otherwise directed in the civil citation and thereafter report to the identified provider to which the
93 juvenile is referred.

94 (f)(1) Providers shall assess referred juveniles using an approved risk assessment tool and may recommend the
95 juvenile to participate in counseling, treatment, community service or other interventions appropriate to the needs of the
96 juvenile as identified by the assessment.

97 (2) For purposes of Chapter 86 of Title 11, a civil citation community provider is all of the following:

- 98 a. Engaged in the rehabilitation of accused persons in the administration of criminal justice.
- 99 b. An authorized user, if qualified under the minimum requirements established under § 8608 of Title 11.
- 100 c. An authorized agency, if qualified under §§ 8610 and 8611 of Title 11.

101 (g) Upon completion of all terms and conditions of the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program, the juvenile
102 shall be discharged successfully without arrest.

103 (h) If the juvenile fails to comply with any requirements of the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program,
104 including any assessments or required services, or otherwise violates any terms or conditions imposed by the identified
105 provider, the juvenile shall be unsuccessfully discharged from the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program. The Civil
106 Citation Coordinator shall advise the referring peace officer of a juvenile's unsuccessful termination from the program. A
107 peace officer, upon receiving notice that a juvenile to whom they have issued a civil citation has been unsuccessfully
108 discharged from the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program, shall be authorized to arrest the juvenile and proceed as
109 otherwise provided in this subchapter.

110 (i) Participation in the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program shall not, with respect to a subsequent arrest,
111 serve to disqualify or otherwise preclude a juvenile from participating in any diversion program at the discretion of the
112 Attorney General.

113 (j) Notwithstanding anything in this section to the contrary, those juveniles referred to the Juvenile Offender Civil
114 Citation Program under § 1002 of this title shall be referred to the Program and may not be arrested for refusal to participate
115 in the Program or violating terms and conditions of the Program.

116 Section 4. Amend § 1010, Chapter 9 of Title 10 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike
117 through and insertions as shown by underline as follows:

118 § 1010. Proceeding against child as an adult; amenability proceeding; referral to another court.

119 (a) A child, aged 16 or older, shall be proceeded against as an adult where:

120 (1) The acts alleged to have been committed constitute first- or second-degree murder, rape in the first degree
121 or rape in the second degree, assault in the first degree, robbery in the first degree (where such offense involves the
122 display of what appears to be a deadly weapon or involves the representation by word or conduct that the person was in
123 possession or control of a deadly weapon or involves the infliction of serious physical injury upon any person who was
124 not a participant in the crime and where the child has previously been adjudicated delinquent of 1 or more offenses
125 which would constitute a felony were the child charged under the laws of this State) or kidnapping in the first degree,
126 or any attempt to commit said crimes;

127 (2) The child is not amenable to the rehabilitative processes available to the Court;

128 (3) The child has previously been adjudicated delinquent of 1 or more offenses which would constitute a
129 felony were he or she charged as an adult under the laws of this State, and has reached his or her sixteenth birthday and
130 the acts which form the basis of the current allegations constitute 1 or more of the following offenses: conspiracy first
131 degree, rape in the third degree, arson first degree, burglary first degree, home invasion, §§ 4752 and 4753 of Title 16
132 or any attempt to commit any of the offenses set forth in this paragraph;

133 (4) The General Assembly has heretofore or shall hereafter so provide;

134 (5) Notwithstanding any in this Code to the contrary, a child over the age of 12 and under the age of 16 may
135 be proceeded against as an adult only when they are alleged to have committed murder in the first degree, murder in
136 the second degree, rape in the first degree, or rape in the second degree.

137 Section 5. Sections 1, Sections 1002 (b)(1), (b)(1)a. and (b)(2) of Section 2, and Section 4 of this Act shall be
138 effective July 1, 2021. Section 1002 (b)(3) of Section 2 and Section 3 of this Act shall be effective January 1, 2022. Section
139 1002 (b)(1)b. of Section 2 expires January 1, 2022.

SYNOPSIS

United States Supreme Court case law and scientific research has changed how we think about juvenile delinquency. We know now that an adolescent's brain is not fully developed until the mid-twenties which makes juveniles especially prone to poor decision-making. In the landmark case of *Miller v. Alabama*, in which the United States Supreme Court prohibited mandatory life sentences without parole for juveniles on the rationale that children are inherently different than adults, the Court relied not only scientific research but on common sense and what any parent knows: kids will be kids.

Children in Delaware have minimum ages set for many things: getting a driver's license, enlisting in the military, applying for a loan or opening a credit card, using a tanning bed, drinking alcohol, and buying tickets to an R-rated movie.

This legislation sets a minimum age at which a child may be prosecuted, except for the most extreme offenses. This Bill prohibits the prosecution of children under the age of 12. It also bars the transfer of juvenile prosecution to the Superior Court unless the child is aged 16 or older. The exception to the prohibition on prosecuting children under 12 and transfer to Superior Court for children under 16, is only for the most serious of charges: murder in the first degree, murder in the second degree, rape in the first and rape in the second degree or accused of using, displaying, or discharging a firearm during the commission of a Title 11 or a Title 31 violent felony set forth in § 4201(c) of Title 11. However, the bill allows for the prosecution of children under 12 for title 11 violent felonies and misdemeanor crimes of violence until January 1, 2022, when prosecution of such children will expire and thereafter children under the age of 12 who are suspected of committing a Title 11 violent felony or misdemeanor violent felony will be referred to the Juvenile Offender Civil Citation Program.