

HB 155 -- Private Probation Services

Sponsor: Gatschenberger

This bill changes the laws regarding the use of private probation services. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Authorizes judges in a circuit court that contracts with private or other court-approved entities for probation services to use, at their discretion, these services for a person who has been convicted of a class C or D felony;

(2) Requires the court to adopt rules for the approval and oversight of private probation services by the court that at a minimum include guidelines for the approval of private probation entities, a method of verifying the fees collected by entities, establishment of the same minimum education and age requirements for private probation officers that are required for state probation officers, requiring all officers to submit to federal and state criminal background checks, requiring all contracts with these entities to include provisions regarding services for indigent clients and a sliding fee scale for the provision of services, and prohibiting any private probation entity from requiring any person to utilize services from any other entity owned or operated by the private probation entity as a condition of receiving its services;

(3) Increases the maximum amount that a private probation service provider can charge from \$50 to \$65 per month; and

(4) Specifies the requirements that a private entity seeking to function as a probation office must meet for a judge to approve its use, including that the entity must be a registered corporation with the state and possess a certificate of corporation in good standing; it must submit a copy of its policies and procedures; all persons providing supervision within the entity must possess a bachelor's degree in criminal justice or other closely related field, or have equivalent relevant professional experience, and be certified by the state as a certified reciprocal alcohol drug counselor or a certified criminal justice addictions professional; and other factors for consideration will be experience and length of time in the field of criminal justice, the entity's financial ability to provide services, and other factors the judge deems necessary and relevant.