

HB 916 -- PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE PERSONS

SPONSOR: Perkins

Currently, individuals convicted under federal or state law of a felony offense involving possession, distribution, or use of a controlled substance are prohibited from participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This bill repeals that prohibition, allowing those individuals to access SNAP benefits.

The bill prohibits all county and city jails, except in extraordinary circumstances, from using restraints on a pregnant offender in her third trimester, including during transportation or labor, delivery, and 48 hours post-delivery.

In cases of extraordinary circumstances that require restraints to be used, the sheriff or jailer must document, in writing and within 48 hours of the incident, the reason for the restraints used, as specified in the bill. If restraints are used, they must be the least restrictive available and the most reasonable under the circumstances. No leg, ankle, or waist restraints, or mechanical restraints can be used; any wrist restraints used must be placed in front of the offender's body. If a doctor, nurse, or other health care provider treating the pregnant offender during this time requests that restraints not be used, the sheriff or jailer accompanying the offender must immediately remove all restraints.

Pregnant offenders are required to be transported in vehicles equipped with seatbelts. Jails must offer staff training on the provisions of this bill and inform offenders of the policies and practices for restraints on pregnant offenders.

By January 1, 2026, all county and city jails must develop specific procedures for intake and care of pregnant offenders, including the provision of maternal health evaluations; dietary supplements; meals; substance abuse treatment; HIV treatment; Hepatitis C treatment; sleeping arrangements; mental health care; sanitary materials; and postpartum recovery.

Currently, a statement made by a child under 14 years of age may be admissible in criminal proceedings, under certain circumstances. This bill amends the age to a child under 18 years of age.

Additionally, the bill provides that visual or audio recordings of a child under 18 years of age or a vulnerable person, as defined in the bill, and relating to certain criminal offenses are admissible in criminal proceedings under certain circumstances, as specified in the bill.

This bill is similar to HB 1777 (2024).