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**Approval for Protections for Children in Detention Wins Praise**

TALLAHASSEE, April 17, 2013 —The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has commended the Senate Criminal Justice Committee for its unanimous approval on Monday of SB 882, a bill that would ensure protections for children and youth in juvenile detention. The vote of approval is an important step toward enacting the bill into law, according to David Utter, Esq., policy director for SPLC-Florida.

Utter stated that the bill passed out of committee “after a concerted effort by parents, community members, educators, advocates and youth throughout the legislative session.” Authored by Senator Audrey Gibson (D-District 15), the bill “provides critical protective standards to all children in juvenile detention, including prohibitions on the use of pepper spray and Tasers, limitations on the use of solitary confinement, and requirements that any sheriff or county that detains children provide adequate staffing and programming.”

HB 947, the House version of SB 882, must now be heard and approved by the House and then approved by the full Senate before it can become law. SB 882 and HB 947 are among four bills that address reform in state juvenile justice polices. The bills offer, in addition to protections for youth in juvenile detention, limitations on Zero Tolerance policies, increased use of civil citation as an alternative to arrest, and restrictions on solitary confinement.

Utter said that supporters of juvenile justice reform would continue to lobby for passage for SB 882 and all the legislative action on all the proposed bills.

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