



An Initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth

Minnesota Alliance With Youth • Minnesota Youth Council
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Dear Representative Feist,

We are writing to extend our support for HF 1233, which would prohibit visual strip searches by non-medical professionals and solitary confinement of delinquent children and youth in detention facilities.

The trauma that a child experiences during a strip search can lead to lifelong adverse health effects such as depression and anxiety.¹ Strip searches can also retraumatize survivors of sexual abuse, who are disproportionately represented in female juvenile detention centers, and may negatively impact development of the frontal lobe. Adults working in juvenile detention facilities can also use strip searches to deliberately abuse children.² It is for these reasons that the American Bar Association has called strip searching “state-imposed trauma” and urges that strip searches of children be prohibited except in the most extreme circumstances.³ The lifelong trauma inflicted on youth by these searches vastly outweighs any usefulness it might have in locating contraband. Instead, facilities can use less-invasive methods like asking children to voluntarily relinquish contraband, allowing children to keep a layer of clothing on during a search, and using electronic detectors to locate contraband.

Like strip searches, disciplinary room time, or solitary confinement, can adversely affect a young person’s mental wellbeing. Effects of solitary confinement include anxiety, depression, paranoia,

¹ “AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION SECTION OF LITIGATION SECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE COMMISSION ON YOUTH AT RISK COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS AND POVERTY COALITION ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC JUSTICE REPORT TO THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES.” *American Bar Association* (2020): p. 5
https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/litigation_committees/childrights/111b-annual-2020-final.pdf

² “Strip-Searching Children is State-Imposed Trauma.” *American Bar Association* (2021)
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/empowering-youth-at-risk/strip-searching-children-is-state-imposed-trauma/

³ *Ibid.*

and psychosis, and the distress of solitary confinement can be likened to physical torture.⁴ Research has shown that solitary confinement does not decrease violence or act as a deterrent.⁵ Despite the Department of Justice banning solitary confinement of juvenile offenders in federal prisons in 2016,⁶ Minnesota still places no restrictions on solitary confinement of youths in its prisons.⁷

We, the Minnesota Youth Council, want Minnesota to be a place where young people are protected, and where the juvenile justice system seeks to uplift, rather than traumatize and dehumanize youth. For these reasons, HF 1233 has our support.

Sincerely,

The Minnesota Youth Council

⁴ Metzner, Jeffrey. "Solitary Confinement and Mental Illness in U.S. Prisons: A Challenge for Medical Ethics." *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* (2010)
<https://jaapl.org/content/38/1/104>

⁵ "National Juvenile Justice Network Testimony in Support of: I. HF922 (Long) Corrections; guidelines for use of restraint on juveniles established, general public excluded from delinquency hearings, juvenile arrest alternatives provided, and juvenile risk assessment provided. II. HF947 (Pinto) Delinquent children and youth in detention facility visual inspection prohibited, delinquent children and youth in detention facility disciplinary room time prohibited, and delinquency and detention age raised to 13 years old. III. HF416 (Edelson) Extended jurisdiction juvenile conviction statistic report required." *National Juvenile Justice Network* (2021).
<https://www.house.mn.gov/comm/docs/DpMS3C9XOk6GcNgAd9714A.pdf>

⁶ Somanader, Tanya. "President Obama: 'Why We Must Rethink Solitary Confinement'." *White House Archives* (2016).
<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2016/01/26/president-obama-why-we-must-rethink-solitary-confinement>

⁷ "States that Limit or Prohibit Juvenile Shackling and Solitary Confinement." *National Conference of State Legislatures* (2022).
<https://www.ncsl.org/civil-and-criminal-justice/states-that-limit-or-prohibit-juvenile-shackling-and-solitary-confinement>