

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

H.238

Introduced by Representatives Colburn of Burlington, Donnally of Hyde Park,  
and Rachelson of Burlington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Crimes and criminal procedure; public defenders

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to require that  
public defender services be available to any person charged with a crime, not  
just to those persons charged with serious crimes.

An act relating to qualification for a public defender

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 13 V.S.A. § 5201 is amended to read:

§ 5201. DEFINITIONS

~~In~~ As used in this chapter, ~~the term~~:

(1) “Detain” means to have in custody or otherwise deprive of freedom  
of action.

(2) “Expenses,” when used with reference to representation under this  
chapter, includes the expenses of investigation, other preparation, and trial.

(3) “Needy person” means a person who at the time his or her need is  
determined is financially unable, without undue hardship, to provide for the

1 full payment of an attorney and all other necessary expenses of representation  
2 or who is otherwise unable to employ an attorney.

3 (4) ~~“Serious crime” includes:~~

4 (A) ~~a felony;~~

5 (B) ~~a misdemeanor the maximum penalty for which is a fine of more~~  
6 ~~than \$1,000.00 or any period of imprisonment unless the judge, at the~~  
7 ~~arraignment but before the entry of a plea, determines and states on the record~~  
8 ~~that he or she will not sentence the defendant to a fine of more than \$1,000.00~~  
9 ~~or a period of imprisonment if the defendant is convicted of the misdemeanor;~~  
10 ~~and~~

11 (C) ~~an act that, but for the age of the person involved, would be a~~  
12 ~~serious crime.~~

13 (5) ~~“Serious crime” does not include the following misdemeanor~~  
14 ~~offenses unless the judge at arraignment but before the entry of a plea~~  
15 ~~determines and states on the record that a sentence of imprisonment or a fine~~  
16 ~~over \$1,000.00 may be imposed on conviction:~~

17 (A) ~~[Repealed.]~~

18 (B) ~~Big game violations (10 V.S.A. § 4518)~~

19 (C) ~~Simple assault by mutual consent (13 V.S.A. § 1023(b))~~

20 (D) ~~Bad checks (13 V.S.A. § 2022)~~

21 (E) ~~Petit larceny (13 V.S.A. § 2502)~~

- 1           ~~(F) Theft of services under \$500.00 (13 V.S.A. § 2582)~~
- 2           ~~(G) Retail theft under \$900.00 (13 V.S.A. § 2577)~~
- 3           ~~(H) Unlawful mischief (13 V.S.A. § 3701(e))~~
- 4           ~~(I) Unlawful trespass (13 V.S.A. § 3705(a))~~
- 5           ~~(J) Disorderly conduct (13 V.S.A. § 1026)~~
- 6           ~~(K) Possession of cannabis first offense (18 V.S.A. § 4230(a)(1))~~
- 7           ~~(L) Violation of municipal ordinances [Repealed.]~~

8       Sec. 2. 13 V.S.A. § 5206 is amended to read:

9       § 5206. ~~APPOINTMENT OF COUNSEL BY COURT; USE OF~~  
10           ~~UNCOUNSELED CONVICTIONS~~

11       ~~(a) Prior to any decision regarding the appointment of counsel under the~~  
12       ~~provisions of subdivisions 5201(4)(B) and (5) of this title, the judge shall~~  
13       ~~inquire of the prosecutor whether a term of imprisonment or a fine over~~  
14       ~~\$1,000.00 will be sought.~~

15       ~~(b) At the request of the prosecutor or on the judge's own motion, at any~~  
16       ~~time prior to the commencement of trial and if there is a change of~~  
17       ~~circumstances or new information, the judge may vacate the commitment to~~  
18       ~~not sentence the defendant to a fine of not more than \$1,000.00 or to a period~~  
19       ~~of incarceration upon conviction. If the judge vacates the commitment, the~~  
20       ~~judge shall inform the defendant of the right to apply for the appointment of~~  
21       ~~counsel at State expense.~~

1       ~~(c) A prior uncounseled criminal conviction of a crime listed in~~  
2       ~~subdivisions (A) through (L) of subdivision (5) of section 5201 of this title in~~  
3       ~~which counsel was denied and the defendant was otherwise entitled to~~  
4       ~~appointed counsel under this subchapter, shall not be used to subject that~~  
5       ~~defendant to the enhanced statutory penalty for a subsequent conviction for the~~  
6       ~~same offense.~~

7       ~~(d) Notwithstanding subdivision 5201(4)(B) of this title, a needy person~~  
8       ~~who is charged with an offense which provides for a felony penalty for the~~  
9       ~~next subsequent conviction for the same offense shall be entitled to counsel~~  
10       ~~under this chapter. [Repealed.]~~

11       Sec. 3. 13 V.S.A. § 5231 is amended to read:

12       § 5231. RIGHT TO REPRESENTATION, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES

13       (a) A needy person who is being detained by a law enforcement officer  
14       without charge or judicial process, or who is charged with having committed or  
15       is being detained under a conviction of a ~~serious~~ crime, is entitled:

16               (1) To be represented by an attorney to the same extent as a person  
17       having his or her own counsel; ~~and,~~

18               (2) To be provided with the necessary services and facilities of  
19       representation. Any such necessary services and facilities of representation  
20       that exceed \$1,500.00 per item must receive prior approval from the court after  
21       a hearing involving the parties. The court may conduct the hearing outside the

1 presence of the State, but only to the extent necessary to preserve privileged or  
2 confidential information. This obligation and requirement to obtain prior court  
3 approval shall also be imposed in like manner upon the Attorney General or a  
4 State's Attorney prosecuting a violation of the law.

5 (b) The attorney, services and facilities, and court costs shall be provided at  
6 public expense to the extent that the person, at the time the court determines  
7 need, is unable to provide for the person's payment without undue hardship.

8 Sec. 4. 13 V.S.A. § 5232 is amended to read:

9 § 5232. PARTICULAR PROCEEDINGS

10 Counsel shall be assigned under section 5231 of this title to represent needy  
11 persons in any of the following:

12 (1) extradition proceedings;

13 (2) habeas corpus and other proceedings ~~wherein~~ in which the person is  
14 confined in a ~~penal correctional facility or mental institution~~ the person is  
15 under an order of hospitalization pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 7619 in this state  
16 State and seeks release therefrom; or

17 (3) proceedings arising out of a petition brought in a juvenile court when  
18 the court deems the interests of justice require representation of either the child  
19 or ~~his or her~~ the child's parents or guardian or both, including any subsequent  
20 proceedings arising from an order ~~therein~~ in the proceedings.

1 Sec. 5. 13 V.S.A. § 5234 is amended to read:

2 § 5234. NOTICE OF RIGHTS; REPRESENTATION PROVIDED

3 (a) If a person who is being detained by a law enforcement officer without  
4 charge or judicial process, or who is charged with having committed or is  
5 being detained under a conviction of a ~~serious~~ crime, is not represented by an  
6 attorney under conditions in which a person having his or her own counsel  
7 would be entitled to be so represented, the law enforcement officer, magistrate,  
8 or court concerned shall:

9 (1) Clearly inform ~~him or her of the right of a~~ the person of the right to  
10 be represented by an attorney and the right of a needy person to be represented  
11 at public expense; ~~and.~~

12 (2) If the person detained or charged does not have an attorney and does  
13 not knowingly, voluntarily, and intelligently waive his or her right to have an  
14 attorney when detained or charged, notify the appropriate public defender that  
15 he or she is not so represented. This shall be done upon commencement of  
16 detention, formal charge, or post-conviction proceeding, ~~as the case may be.~~

17 As used in this subsection, the term “commencement of detention” includes the  
18 taking into custody of a probationer or parolee.

19 (b) Upon commencement of any later judicial proceeding relating to the  
20 same matter, the presiding officer shall clearly inform the person ~~so~~ detained or

1 charged of the right of a needy person to be represented by an attorney at  
2 public expense.

3 (c) Information given to a person by a law enforcement officer under this  
4 section is effective only if it is communicated to a person in a manner meeting  
5 standards under the ~~constitution of the United States~~ U.S. Constitution relating  
6 to admissibility in evidence against him or her of statements of a detained  
7 person.

8 (d) Information meeting the standards of subsection (c) of this section and  
9 given to a person by a law enforcement officer under this section gives rise to a  
10 rebuttable presumption that the information was effectively communicated if:

11 (1) ~~It~~ it is in writing or otherwise recorded;

12 (2) ~~The~~ the recipient records his or her acknowledgment of receipt and  
13 time of receipt of the information; and

14 (3) ~~The~~ the material so recorded under subdivisions (1) and (2) of this  
15 subsection is filed with the court next concerned.

16 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

17 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.