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ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 138—COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

(ON BEHALF OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON  
CHILD WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE)

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

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Referred to Committee on Judiciary

SUMMARY—Enacts a juvenile competency standard.  
(BDR 5-188)

FISCAL NOTE: Effect on Local Government: May have Fiscal Impact.  
Effect on the State: Yes.

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EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

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AN ACT relating to juvenile justice; requiring the juvenile court to suspend a case if doubt arises as to whether a child is competent; requiring the juvenile court to appoint certain experts to evaluate a child and provide a written report on the competence of the child if the juvenile court suspends a case to determine whether the child is competent; requiring the juvenile court to hold an expedited hearing to determine whether a child is competent upon receipt of the written reports of all appointed experts; requiring the juvenile court to conduct a periodic review of a child determined to be incompetent; authorizing the juvenile court to terminate its jurisdiction in certain circumstances if a child has not attained competence and will be unable to attain competence in the foreseeable future; providing that a child determined to be incompetent may not be adjudicated a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision or placed under the supervision of the juvenile court during the period that the child remains incompetent; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.



\* A B 1 3 8 \*

**Legislative Counsel's Digest:**

This bill enacts a juvenile competency standard. **Section 3** of this bill provides that any time after a petition is filed and before the final disposition of a case, if doubt arises as to whether a child is competent, the juvenile court is required to suspend the case until the question of competence is determined. **Section 4** of this bill requires a person who makes a motion for the evaluation of a child for the purpose of determining whether the child is competent to: (1) certify that the motion is being made in good faith and is based on reasonable grounds to believe that the child is incompetent; and (2) specify facts that support the motion. **Section 5** of this bill provides that if the juvenile court suspends a case to determine whether a child is competent, the juvenile court must appoint one or more able and qualified experts, at least one of whom is a psychologist or psychiatrist, to evaluate the child and provide a written report on the competence of the child. **Section 6** of this bill sets forth certain considerations an expert must take into account as part of his or her evaluation, and **section 7** of this bill sets forth certain requirements relating to the written report of an expert.

**Section 8** of this bill requires the juvenile court to hold an expedited hearing to determine whether a child is competent upon receipt of the required written reports from all experts appointed by the juvenile court. **Section 9** of this bill authorizes the juvenile court to consider information relevant to the determination of the competence of a child and information elicited from the child only for certain purposes. Under **section 10** of this bill, after the juvenile court considers the written reports of the appointed experts, any additional written reports, and testimony and other evidence presented at the hearing, the juvenile court must determine whether the child is competent. If the juvenile court determines that the child is incompetent, the juvenile court is required to make certain additional determinations and issue all necessary and appropriate recommendations and orders.

**Section 11** of this bill requires that if the juvenile court determines that a child is incompetent, the juvenile court must conduct a periodic review to determine whether the child has attained competence. After a periodic review is conducted, if the juvenile court determines that the child: (1) has attained competence, the juvenile court is required to proceed with the case; (2) has not attained competence, the juvenile court is required to order appropriate treatment; and (3) has not attained competence and will be unable to attain competence in the foreseeable future, the juvenile court is required to hold a hearing to consider the best interests of the child and the safety of the community and determine whether to dismiss any petitions pending before the juvenile court and terminate its jurisdiction.

**Section 12** of this bill provides that if the juvenile court determines that a child is incompetent, the child may not, during the period that the child remains incompetent, be: (1) adjudicated a delinquent child or a child in need of supervision; or (2) placed under the supervision of the juvenile court.

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THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, REPRESENTED IN  
SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

**Section 1.** Chapter 62D of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto the provisions set forth as sections 2 to 12, inclusive, of this act.

**Sec. 2.** *As used in sections 2 to 12, inclusive, of this act, unless the context otherwise requires, "incompetent" means a child does not have the present ability to:*



\* A B 1 3 8 \*

1     1. Understand the nature of the delinquency or, if the child is  
2     a child in need of supervision, the allegations against the child;

3     2. Understand the nature and purpose of the court  
4     proceedings; or

5     3. Aid and assist the child's counsel in the defense at any  
6     time during the proceedings with a reasonable degree of rational  
7     understanding.

8     **Sec. 3.** 1. Any time after a petition is filed and before the  
9     final disposition of a case, if doubt arises as to the competence of a  
10    child, the juvenile court shall suspend the case until the question  
11    of competence is determined.

12    2. During the period when the competence of a child is being  
13    determined, the juvenile court shall consider the appropriate  
14    placement of the child and any services or other care to be  
15    provided to the child that are necessary for the well-being of the  
16    child or for public safety, and may issue any necessary orders.

17    3. The period in which the juvenile court is required to make  
18    its final disposition of a case, as set forth in NRS 62D.310, is tolled  
19    during the period when the competence of a child is being  
20    determined.

21    **Sec. 4.** A person who makes a motion for the evaluation of a  
22    child for the purpose of determining whether the child is  
23    incompetent shall:

24    1. Certify that the motion is being made in good faith and is  
25    based on reasonable grounds to believe that the child is  
26    incompetent and cannot proceed in the case; and

27    2. Specify facts that support the motion, including, without  
28    limitation, any nonprivileged observations of or statements made  
29    by the child.

30    **Sec. 5.** 1. If the juvenile court suspends a case pursuant to  
31    section 3 of this act, the juvenile court shall appoint one or more  
32    experts, at least one of whom is a psychologist or psychiatrist, to  
33    evaluate the child and report on the competence of the child.

34    2. Before appointing an expert to evaluate and report on the  
35    competence of the child, the juvenile court shall consider the  
36    following factors to determine the ability and qualification of  
37    the expert to provide such an evaluation and report:

38    (a) The training and experience of the expert in child  
39    psychology, child and adolescent psychiatry or child forensic  
40    psychiatry;

41    (b) The licensure or professional certification of the expert;  
42    and

43    (c) Any other factor the juvenile court deems appropriate in  
44    making the appointment.



1       3. *An expert appointed by the juvenile court to evaluate and*  
2 *report on the competence of a child must:*

3       (a) *Be deemed by the juvenile court to be able and qualified to*  
4 *evaluate and report on the competence of the child pursuant to*  
5 *subsection 2; and*

6       (b) *Prepare and provide a written report to the juvenile court*  
7 *and the parties not later than 14 days after the juvenile court*  
8 *enters an order appointing the expert, unless the juvenile*  
9 *court provides an extension for good cause shown.*

10      4. *The appointment of an expert pursuant to this section does*  
11 *not preclude the district attorney or the child from calling any*  
12 *other expert witness to testify concerning the competence of the*  
13 *child at an adjudicatory hearing, a hearing on a violation of the*  
14 *juvenile probation or a hearing to determine whether the child is*  
15 *incompetent. Any such expert witness must be allowed to evaluate*  
16 *the child and examine all relevant records and documents.*

17      **Sec. 6.** 1. *An expert who is appointed by the juvenile court*  
18 *pursuant to section 5 of this act shall evaluate the child as*  
19 *specified in the court order appointing the expert.*

20      2. *An expert shall consider as part of his or her evaluation*  
21 *the child's ability to:*

22       (a) *Appreciate the allegations against the child;*

23       (b) *Appreciate the range and nature of possible penalties that*  
24 *may be imposed upon the child, if applicable;*

25       (c) *Understand the adversary nature of the legal process;*

26       (d) *Disclose to the child's counsel facts pertinent to the case;*

27       (e) *Display appropriate courtroom behavior; and*

28       (f) *Testify regarding relevant issues.*

29      3. *An expert shall also consider as part of his or her*  
30 *evaluation the following circumstances of a child:*

31       (a) *The age and developmental maturity of the child;*

32       (b) *Whether the child has a mental illness or disability or a*  
33 *developmental disorder;*

34       (c) *Whether the child has any other disability that affects the*  
35 *competence of the child; and*

36       (d) *Any other factor that affects the competence of the child.*

37      **Sec. 7.** 1. *A written report submitted by an expert pursuant*  
38 *to subsection 3 of section 5 of this act must:*

39       (a) *Identify the specific matters referred to the expert by the*  
40 *juvenile court for evaluation;*

41       (b) *Describe the procedures, techniques and tests used in the*  
42 *evaluation of the child and the purposes of each;*

43       (c) *Describe the considerations taken into account by the*  
44 *expert pursuant to section 6 of this act;*



1     (d) State any clinical observations, findings and opinions of  
2     the expert on each issue referred to the expert for evaluation by  
3     the juvenile court and specifically indicate any issues on which the  
4     expert was unable to give an opinion;

5     (e) Identify the sources of information used by the expert and  
6     present the factual basis for any clinical observations, findings  
7     and opinions of the expert; and

8     (f) State any recommended counseling, treatment, education  
9     or therapy to assist the child with behavioral, emotional,  
10    psychological or psychiatric issues, if ordered by the juvenile court  
11    to provide such recommendations.

12    2. In addition to the requirements set forth in subsection 1, if  
13    an expert believes that a child is incompetent, the expert shall also  
14    include in the report:

15    (a) Any recommended treatment or education for the child to  
16    attain competence;

17    (b) The likelihood that the child will attain competence under  
18    the recommended treatment or education;

19    (c) An assessment of the probable duration of the treatment or  
20    education required to attain competence;

21    (d) The probability that the child will attain competence in the  
22    foreseeable future; and

23    (e) If the expert recommends treatment for the child to attain  
24    competence, a recommendation as to whether services can best be  
25    provided to the child as an outpatient or inpatient, or by  
26    commitment to an institution for persons with intellectual  
27    disabilities or mental illness pursuant to NRS 62E.160.

28    **Sec. 8. 1.** Upon receipt of the required written reports from  
29    all experts appointed by the juvenile court, the juvenile court shall  
30    hold an expedited hearing to determine whether the child is  
31    incompetent.

32    2. The parties may waive the presence of witnesses and  
33    submit the issue of competence to the juvenile court on the written  
34    reports of the experts who evaluated the child.

35    3. The party who made the motion to determine whether the  
36    child is competent has the burden of proof to rebut the  
37    presumption of competence by a preponderance of the evidence.

38    4. Unless the parties stipulate or the juvenile court orders  
39    otherwise, the parties shall disclose all witnesses, reports and  
40    documents at least 10 days before the scheduled day of the  
41    hearing.

42    5. During the hearing, the parties may:

43    (a) Introduce other evidence, including, without limitation,  
44    evidence related to treatment, competence and the possibility of  
45    ordering the involuntary administration of medicine; and



*(b) Cross-examine witnesses.*

**Sec. 9.** *1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection 2, the juvenile court may consider any information that is relevant to the determination of the competence of the child and any information elicited from the child pursuant to sections 2 to 12, inclusive, of this act only for the purpose of:*

*(a) Determining whether the child is incompetent; and*

*(b) Making a final disposition of the case.*

*2. The provisions of subsection 1 do not apply if a child whose competence is being determined presents any information to the juvenile court for a purpose other than those set forth in subsection 1.*

**Sec. 10.** *1. After the juvenile court considers the written reports of all the experts appointed by the juvenile court, any additional written reports, and testimony and other evidence presented at the hearing, the juvenile court shall determine whether the child is incompetent.*

*2. If the juvenile court determines that the child is competent, the juvenile court shall proceed with the case.*

*3. If the juvenile court determines that the child is incompetent, the juvenile court shall determine whether:*

*(a) The child is a danger to himself or herself or society;*

*(b) Providing services to the child will assist the child in attaining competence and further the policy goals set forth in NRS 62A.360; and*

*(c) Any services provided to the child can best be provided to the child as an outpatient or inpatient, by commitment to an institution for persons with intellectual disabilities or mental illness pursuant to NRS 62E.160, or as otherwise allowed by law.*

*4. After the juvenile court makes the determinations set forth in subsection 3, the juvenile court shall issue all necessary and appropriate recommendations and orders.*

*5. Any treatment ordered by the juvenile court must provide the level of care, guidance and control that will be conducive to the child's welfare and the best interests of this State.*

**Sec. 11.** *1. If the juvenile court determines that a child is incompetent pursuant to section 10 of this act, the juvenile court shall conduct a periodic review to determine whether the child has attained competence. Unless the juvenile court terminates its jurisdiction pursuant to paragraph (c) of subsection 3, such a periodic review must be conducted:*

*(a) Not later than 6 months after the date of commitment to an institution for persons with intellectual disabilities or mental illness pursuant to NRS 62E.160 or the date treatment ordered by the court commenced, whichever is earlier;*



(b) After any period of extended treatment;

(c) After the child completes any treatment ordered by the juvenile court;

(d) After a person ordered by the juvenile court to provide services to the child pursuant to section 10 of this act determines that the child has attained competence or will never attain competence; or

(e) At shorter intervals as ordered by the juvenile court.

2. Before a periodic review is conducted pursuant to subsection 1, any person ordered by the juvenile court to provide services to a child pursuant to section 10 of this act must provide a written report to the juvenile court, the parties, and the department of juvenile services or Youth Parole Bureau, as applicable.

3. After a periodic review is conducted pursuant to subsection 1, if the juvenile court determines that the child:

(a) Is competent, the juvenile court shall enter an order accordingly and proceed with the case.

(b) Has not attained competence, the juvenile court shall order appropriate treatment, including, without limitation, residential or nonresidential placement in accordance with sections 2 to 12, inclusive, of this act, commitment to an institution for persons with intellectual disabilities or mental illness pursuant to NRS 62E.160, or as otherwise allowed by law.

(c) Has not attained competence and will be unable to attain competence in the foreseeable future, the juvenile court shall hold a hearing to consider the best interests of the child and the safety of the community and determine whether to dismiss any petitions pending before the juvenile court and terminate the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. In determining whether to dismiss a petition and terminate its jurisdiction pursuant to this paragraph, the juvenile court shall consider:

(1) The nature and gravity of the act allegedly committed by the child, including, without limitation, whether the act involved violence, the infliction of serious bodily injury or the use of a weapon;

(2) The date the act was allegedly committed by the child;

(3) The number of times the child has allegedly committed the act;

(4) The extent to which the child has received counseling, therapy or treatment, and the response of the child to any such counseling, therapy or treatment;

(5) The extent to which the child has received education, services or treatment relating to remediating, restoring or attaining competence and the response of the child to any such education, services or treatment;



1       (6) *Whether any psychological or psychiatric profiles of the*  
2 *child indicate a risk of recidivism;*

3       (7) *The behavior of the child while he or she is subject to*  
4 *the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, including, without limitation,*  
5 *during any period of confinement;*

6       (8) *The extent to which counseling, therapy or treatment*  
7 *will be available to the child in the absence of continued juvenile*  
8 *court jurisdiction;*

9       (9) *Any physical conditions that minimize the risk of*  
10 *recidivism, including, without limitation, physical disability or*  
11 *illness;*

12       (10) *The age, mental attitude, maturity level and emotional*  
13 *stability of the child;*

14       (11) *The extent of family support available to the child;*

15       (12) *Whether the child has had positive psychological and*  
16 *social evaluations; and*

17       (13) *Any other factor the juvenile court deems relevant to*  
18 *the determination of whether continued juvenile court jurisdiction*  
19 *will be conducive to the welfare of the child and the safety of the*  
20 *community.*

21       **Sec. 12.** *If the juvenile court determines that a child is*  
22 *incompetent pursuant to section 10 of this act, during the period*  
23 *that the child remains incompetent, the child may not be:*

24       1. *Adjudicated a delinquent child or a child in need of*  
25 *supervision; or*

26       2. *Placed under the supervision of the juvenile court*  
27 *pursuant to a supervision and consent decree pursuant to*  
28 *NRS 62C.230.*

