GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

Session 2017

Legislative Incarceration Fiscal Note

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 384 (First Edition)

SHORT TITLE: Increase Penalties/Organized Retail Theft.

SPONSOR(S): Representatives Fraley, Jordan, Warren, and Wray

FISCAL IMPACT (\$ in millions)							
	□Yes	□No	No Estimate Available				
Г	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22		
State Impact							
General Fund Revenues:							
General Fund Expenditures							
State Positions:							
NET STATE IMPACT Likely budget cost. See Assumptions & Methodology section for additional details.							
PRINCIPAL DEPARTMENT(S) & PROGRAM(S) AFFECTED: Administrative Office of the Courts; Indigent Defense Services; Department of Public Safety							
EFFECTIVE DATE: December 1, 2017							
TECHNICAL CONSID	DERATIONS:						

FISCAL IMPACT SUMMARY:

The proposed bill may have a fiscal impact to address new chargeable offenses being enforced, adjudicated, and having penalties applied to those convicted of the new offenses. However, given that there is no historical data on these new offenses or similar offenses to use as a proxy for predicting the total number of new offenses, the Fiscal Research Division cannot reasonably estimate the total additional costs that may be incurred. The following costs may be incurred for every one person charged and convicted of these crimes:

- Administrative Office of the Courts: \$110 to \$938 per disposition
- Indigent Defense Services: \$106 to \$498 per disposition
- Department of Public Safety (DPS) Prisons: \$5,027 to \$6,398 per active felony sentence
- DPS Community Corrections: Minimum of \$1,332 per conviction

Please see the Assumptions and Methodology section for additional information.

BILL SUMMARY:

Section 1 of the bill amends existing G.S. 14-72.11, Larceny from a merchant, by adding two new felony offenses. New G.S. 14-72.11(5) makes it a Class H felony for a person to exchange stolen property for something of value, cash, a gift card, or a merchandise card. This behavior can currently be prosecuted under G.S. 14-100, Obtaining property by false pretenses, a Class H felony if the value of the property is less than \$100,000, a Class C felony if the value of the property is \$100,000 or more. Since the offenses are in the same class or a more serious class than the proposed offense, the proposed new offense is not expected to have any impact. New G.S. 14-72.11(6) creates a new Class H felony for a person to return stolen property and utilize fictitious identification to prevent the merchant from properly identifying the person seeking to return the property.

Section 2 of the bill amends existing G.S. 14-86.6, Organized retail theft, to add two new felony offenses. New G.S. 14-86.6(a1)(1) makes it a Class G felony for a person to conspire with another person to commit theft of retail property from retail establishments, with a value exceeding twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) aggregated over a 90-day period, with the intent to sell that retail property for monetary or other gain, and who takes or causes that retail property to be placed in the control of a retail property fence or other person in exchange for consideration. Violations of the new offense would currently be prosecuted under existing G.S. 14-86.6(a)(1), which makes it a Class H felony for a person to commit this offense if the value of the retail property exceeds one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500). New G.S. 14-86.6(a1)(2) makes it a Class G felony for a person to act as leader of an organized retail theft enterprise if the person conspires with others as an organizer, supervisor, financier, or manager to engage for profit in a scheme or course of conduct to effectuate the transfer or sale of property stolen from a merchant. This section adds a statutory definition of "Organized retail theft enterprise" as two or more persons who associate for the purpose of engaging in the conduct of organized retail theft.

Section 3 of the bill amends existing G.S. 66-387, Definitions, to clarify that "goods" in the definition of "Currency converter" includes a gift card or merchandise card of any value not issued by the person, and to add an itinerant merchant as defined in G.S. 66-250(1) or a Web site located in North Carolina. To the extent that that these amendments expand the definition of "Currency converter," there could be additional violations of G.S. 66-392, Record-keeping requirements for cash converters, a Class 2 misdemeanor pursuant to G.S. 66-396, Penalties.

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY:

General

The Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission prepares prison population projections for each bill containing a criminal penalty. The Commission assumes for such bills that expanding existing or creating new criminal offenses produces no deterrent or incapacitative effect on crime. Therefore, the Fiscal Research Division does not assume deterrent effects for any criminal penalty bill.

S.L. 2011-192 (H.B. 642), the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA), made changes to North Carolina's court system, corrections system (both to prisons and probation), and to post-release supervision. All active sentences for felony offenses now result in a minimum of twelve months of post-release supervision (PRS) for B1-E level offenses and a minimum of nine months of PRS for F-I level offenses.

JRA also created the Statewide Misdemeanant Confinement Program (SMCP) for housing misdemeanants with sentences between 90 and 180 days in county jails (misdemeanants with shorter sentences were already the responsibility of the counties). County participation in the program is voluntary. The SMCP pays participating counties for misdemeanants' housing, transportation, and medical costs. In 2014, the program was expanded to include all misdemeanants with sentences longer than 90 days. The Sentencing

and Policy Advisory Commission does not track county jail capacity, so it is not possible to estimate the impact of new or increased misdemeanor penalties on county jails.

SECTION 1

This section creates two new Class H felonies. The first makes it a Class H felony for a person to exchange stolen property for something of value, cash, a gift card, or a merchandise card. This behavior can currently be prosecuted under G.S. 14-100, Obtaining property by false pretenses, a Class H felony if the value of the property is less than \$100,000, a Class C felony if the value of the property is \$100,000 or more. Since the offenses are in the same class or a more serious class than the proposed offense, the proposed new offense is not expected to have any impact.

The second new felony is a Class H felony for a person to return stolen property and utilize fictitious identification to prevent the merchant from properly identifying the person seeking to return the property.

Judicial Branch

The Administrative Office of the Courts provides Fiscal Research with a fiscal impact analysis for most criminal penalty bills. For such bills, fiscal impact is typically based on the assumption that court time will increase due to anticipated increases in trials and corresponding increases in workload for judges, clerks, and prosecutors. This increased court time is also expected to result in greater expenditures for jury fees and indigent defense.

Section 1 of the bill creates a new Class H felony offense. Because this is a new offense, AOC does not have historical data upon which to estimate the number of charges that might occur. AOC provides estimates of the average cost to the court for a charge by offense class. For every additional person charged with a Class H felony, the average cost to the court would be \$625.

The Office of Indigent Defense Services (IDS) has provided Fiscal Research with the frequency and cost of indigent defense services for each level of crime, including the cost differentials for district and superior court with and without a trial and the percentage of cases handled in each category. Fiscal Research used this data to calculate a weighted average of IDS costs. In FY 2011-12, the most recent year data is available, 78% of Class H felony cases were handled through IDS. The weighted average cost of a new Class H felony is \$392 per case for a private appointed counsel (PAC) attorney. This estimate assumes the appointment of a PAC attorney. In districts that have Public Defender offices, cases may be handled by those offices. In those instances, this cost may not be incurred.

Department of Public Safety - Prisons

The chart below depicts the projected inmate population relative to available prison bed capacity systemwide. Capacity projections assume operation at Expanded Operating Capacity, and represent the total number of beds in operation, or authorized for construction or operation as of December 2015.

Based on the most recent population projections and estimated bed capacity, there are surplus prison beds available for the five-year fiscal note horizon and beyond. Therefore, no additional beds will be required unless the projected number of additional inmates resulting from a bill (row four) exceeds the projected number of beds under the inmate population (row three).

¹ Expanded Operating Capacity (EOC) is: 1) the number of single cells housing one inmate, 2) the number of single cells housing two inmates, and 3) the number of beds in dormitories, allowing between 35 (130% of Standard Operating Capacity) and 50 (SOC) square feet per inmate.

Population Projections and Bed Capacity Five Year Impact						
	June 30 2018	June 30 2019	June 30 2020	June 30 2021	June 30 2022	
1. Inmates ²	37,304	37,601	37,367	37,385	37,642	
2. Prison Beds (Expanded Capacity)	38,373	38,373	38,373	38,373	38,373	
3. Beds Over/(Under) Inmate Population	1,069	772	1,006	988	731	
4. Additional Inmates Due to this Bill ³		No	estimate ava	ilable		
5. Additional Beds Required						

Since this section creates a new offense, the Sentencing Commission does not have any historical data from which to estimate the impact on the prison population. A threshold analysis is provided when it is not known how many offenders might be convicted and sentenced as a result of the proposed change. For each offense class, the threshold estimate is the number of convictions that result in the need for one prison bed in the first year.

In FY 2015-16, 35% of Class H felony convictions resulted in active sentences, with an average estimated time served of 11 months. Nine months of post-release supervision is required upon release from prison following an active sentence or revocation of probation. The following table shows the estimated annual bed impact if there were four convictions (the threshold) or 20 convictions for this proposed offense per year. The five year estimate takes into account the combination of active sentences and probation and post-release supervision violations resulting in confinement, as well as growth rates adopted by the Sentencing Commission's Forecasting Technical Advisory Group.

Estimated Prison Bed Impact Using Threshold Convictions and 20 Convictions Class H Felony							
Convictions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5		
4 (Threshold)	1	2	2	2	2		
20	7	10	10	10	10		

In addition to the capital costs that may be associated with additional bed needs, there are also per diem costs for housing inmates. The cost to add one additional inmate to the prison system is \$15.02 per day, or \$457 per month, which includes the cost of food, clothing, and health care. In FY 2015-16, 35% of Class H felony offenders received active sentences averaging 11 months. For every one Class H felony offender receiving an active sentence, the cost to the prison section will be \$5,027 (\$457 monthly cost times 11 months).

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² The Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission prepares inmate population projections annually. These projections are derived from: historical information on incarceration and release rates under Structured Sentencing; crime rate forecasts by a technical advisory group; probation and offender revocation rates; and the decline (parole and max-outs) of the stock prison population sentenced under prior sentencing acts. Projections were updated in February 2016.

³ Criminal penalty bills effective December 1, 2016 should not affect prison population and bed needs until FY 2017-18 due to the lag time between offense charge and sentencing - six months on average. No delayed effect is presumed for the Court System.

Department of Public Safety – Community Corrections

All active sentences for felony offenses now result in a minimum of twelve months of post-release supervision (PRS) for B1-E level offenses and a minimum of nine months of PRS for F-I level offenses. Additionally, for felony offense classes F through I offenders may be given non-active (intermediate or community) sentences exclusively, or in conjunction with imprisonment (split-sentence). Sanctions include electronic house arrest, community service, substance abuse treatment, participation in educational or vocational skills development, payment of court costs, fines, and restitution, and short-term jail sentences not exceeding six days per month.

JRA essentially eliminated the distinction between "community" and "intermediate" supervision. Under structured sentencing, the two types of supervision were each defined by a set of specific sanctions. Under JRA, both community and intermediate probation may now include electronic monitoring, short-term periods of confinement, substance abuse assessment, monitoring, and treatment, participation in educational programs or vocational skills development. Whether a probationer is subject to more stringent conditions is determined by the results of a risk-needs assessment administered by the Department of Public Safety.

All types of post-release supervision are supervised by the Community Corrections Section (CCS); CCS also oversees community service. Supervision by a probation officer costs \$148 per offender, per month; no cost is assumed for those receiving unsupervised probation, or who are only ordered to pay fines, fees, or restitution. Total costs are based on average supervision length and the percentage of offenders (per offense class) sentenced to active sentences requiring post-release supervision and supervised probations.

In FY 2015-16, 35% of Class H felony offenders received active sentences. All active sentences for Class F through I felonies result in nine months of post-release supervision (PRS). The average length of probation imposed for this offense class was 27 months. Therefore, at a minimum, one conviction resulting from this bill will require at least nine months of supervision. The cost of nine months of supervision is \$1,332 per offender (\$148 per month times nine months). For every offender sentenced to probation, the average cost would be \$3,996 (\$148 per month times 27 months).

SECTION 2

Section 2 of the bill amends existing G.S. 14-86.6, Organized retail theft, to add two new felony offenses. New G.S. 14-86.6(a1)(1) makes it a Class G felony for a person to conspire with another person to commit theft of retail property from retail establishments, with a value exceeding twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) aggregated over a 90-day period, with the intent to sell that retail property for monetary or other gain, and who takes or causes that retail property to be placed in the control of a retail property fence or other person in exchange for consideration. Violations of the new offense would currently be prosecuted under existing G.S. 14-86.6(a)(1), which makes it a Class H felony for a person to commit this offense if the value of the retail property exceeds one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500).

This section also creates new G.S. 14-86.6(a1)(2), which makes it a Class G felony for a person to act as leader of an organized retail theft enterprise if the person conspires with others as an organizer, supervisor, financier, or manager to engage for profit in a scheme or course of conduct to effectuate the transfer or sale of property stolen from a merchant. This bill adds a statutory definition of "Organized retail theft

⁴ Due to the effective date of December 1, 2017 and the typical lag time between charge and conviction (6 months), little impact is assumed for CCS in FY 2017-18. Though some offenders may come under CCS supervision during this time, this note assumes an even entry over the course of FY 2018-19.

enterprise" as two or more persons who associate for the purpose of engaging in the conduct of organized retail theft.

Judicial Branch

The Administrative Office of the Courts provides Fiscal Research with a fiscal impact analysis for most criminal penalty bills. For such bills, fiscal impact is typically based on the assumption that court time will increase due to anticipated increases in trials and corresponding increases in workload for judges, clerks, and prosecutors. This increased court time is also expected to result in greater expenditures for jury fees and indigent defense.

Section 2 of the bill increases an existing Class H felony offense to a Class G felony offense, and creates a new Class G felony offense. AOC does not have historical data upon which to estimate the number of charges that might occur. AOC provides estimates of the average cost to the court for a charge by offense class. For every additional person charged with a Class G felony, the average cost to the court would be \$938. For those cases that would have been prosecuted under the Class H felony, the cost to the courts of increasing the charge class to a Class G felony offense would be \$313 per case (\$938 Class G cost minus \$625 Class H cost).

The Office of Indigent Defense Services (IDS) has provided Fiscal Research with the frequency and cost of indigent defense services for each level of crime, including the cost differentials for district and superior court with and without a trial and the percentage of cases handled in each category. Fiscal Research used this data to calculate a weighted average of IDS costs. In FY 2011-12, the most recent year data is available, 78% of Class G felony cases were handled through IDS. The weighted average cost of a new Class G felony is \$498 per case for a private appointed counsel (PAC) attorney. For those cases that would have been prosecuted under the Class H felony, the cost to IDS of increasing the charge class to a Class G felony would be \$106 (\$498 Class G cost minus \$392 Class H cost). These estimates assume the appointment of a PAC attorney. In districts that have Public Defender offices, cases may be handled by those offices. In those instances, these costs may not be incurred.

Department of Public Safety – Prisons

The chart below depicts the projected inmate population relative to available prison bed capacity systemwide. Capacity projections assume operation at Expanded Operating Capacity,⁵ and represent the total number of beds in operation, or authorized for construction or operation as of December 2015.

Based on the most recent population projections and estimated bed capacity, there are surplus prison beds available for the five-year fiscal note horizon and beyond. Therefore, no additional beds will be required unless the projected number of additional inmates resulting from a bill (row four) exceeds the projected number of beds under the inmate population (row three).

⁵ Expanded Operating Capacity (EOC) is: 1) the number of single cells housing one inmate, 2) the number of single cells housing two inmates, and 3) the number of beds in dormitories, allowing between 35 (130% of Standard Operating Capacity) and 50 (SOC) square feet per inmate.

Population Projections and Bed Capacity Five Year Impact						
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1. Inmates ⁶	37,304	37,601	37,367	37,385	37,642	
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3. Beds Over/(Under) Inmate Population	1,069	772	1,006	988	731	
4. Additional Inmates Due to this Bill ⁷		No	estimate ava	ilable		
5. Additional Beds Required						

Since this section creates a new offense, the Sentencing Commission does not have any historical data from which to estimate the impact on the prison population. A threshold analysis is provided when it is not known how many offenders might be convicted and sentenced as a result of the proposed change. For each offense class, the threshold estimate is the number of convictions that result in the need for one prison bed in the first year.

In FY 2015-16, 39% of Class G felony convictions resulted in active sentences, with an average estimated time served of 14 months. Nine months of post-release supervision is required upon release from prison following an active sentence or revocation of probation. The following table shows the estimated annual impact if there were three convictions (the threshold) or 20 convictions for this proposed offense per year. The five year estimate takes into account the combination of active sentences and probation and post-release supervision violations resulting in confinement, as well as growth rates adopted by the Sentencing Commission's Forecasting Technical Advisory Group.

Estimated Prison Bed Impact Using Threshold Convictions and 20 Convictions Class G Felony							
Convictions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5		
3 (Threshold)	1	2	2	2	2		
20	8	14	14	14	14		

In addition to the capital costs that may be associated with additional bed needs, there are also per diem costs for housing inmates. The cost to add one additional inmate to the prison system is \$15.02 per day, or \$457 per month, which includes the cost of food, clothing, and health care. In FY 2015-16, 39% of Class G felony offenders received active sentences averaging 14 months. For every one Class G felony offender receiving an active sentence, the cost to the prison section will be \$6,398 (\$457 monthly cost times 14 months).

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⁶ The Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission prepares inmate population projections annually. These projections are derived from: historical information on incarceration and release rates under Structured Sentencing; crime rate forecasts by a technical advisory group; probation and offender revocation rates; and the decline (parole and max-outs) of the stock prison population sentenced under prior sentencing acts. Projections were updated in February 2017.

⁷ Criminal penalty bills effective December 1, 2017 should not affect prison population and bed needs until FY 2018-19 due to the lag time between offense charge and sentencing - six months on average. No delayed effect is presumed for the Court System.

Department of Public Safety - Community Corrections

All active sentences for felony offenses now result in a minimum of twelve months of post-release supervision (PRS) for B1-E level offenses and a minimum of nine months of PRS for F-I level offenses. Additionally, for felony offense classes F through I offenders may be given non-active (intermediate or community) sentences exclusively, or in conjunction with imprisonment (split-sentence). Sanctions include electronic house arrest, community service, substance abuse treatment, participation in educational or vocational skills development, payment of court costs, fines, and restitution, and short-term jail sentences not exceeding six days per month.

JRA essentially eliminated the distinction between "community" and "intermediate" supervision. Under structured sentencing, the two types of supervision were each defined by a set of specific sanctions. Under JRA, both community and intermediate probation may now include electronic monitoring, short-term periods of confinement, substance abuse assessment, monitoring, and treatment, participation in educational programs or vocational skills development. Whether a probationer is subject to more stringent conditions is determined by the results of a risk-needs assessment administered by the Department of Public Safety.

All types of post-release supervision are supervised by the Community Corrections Section (CCS); CCS also oversees community service. Supervision by a probation officer costs \$148 per offender, per month; no cost is assumed for those receiving unsupervised probation, or who are only ordered to pay fines, fees, or restitution. Total costs are based on average supervision length and the percentage of offenders (per offense class) sentenced to active sentences requiring post-release supervision and supervised probations.

In FY 2015-16, 39% of Class G felony offenders received active sentences. All active sentences for Class G through I felonies result in nine months of post-release supervision (PRS). The average length of probation imposed for this offense class was 29 months. Therefore, at a minimum, one conviction resulting from this bill will require at least nine months of supervision. The cost of nine months of supervision is \$1,332 per offender (\$148 per month times nine months). For every offender sentenced to probation, the average cost would be \$4,292 (\$148 per month times 29 months).

SECTION 3

Section 3 of the bill amends existing G.S. 66-387, Definitions, to clarify that "goods" in the definition of "Currency converter" includes a gift card or merchandise card of any value not issued by the person, and to add an itinerant merchant as defined in G.S. 66-250(1) or a Web site located in North Carolina. To the extent that that these amendments expand the definition of "Currency converter," there could be additional violations of G.S. 66-392, Record-keeping requirements for cash converters, a Class 2 misdemeanor pursuant to G.S. 66-396, Penalties.

Judicial Branch

This section expands the scope of an existing Class 2 misdemeanor offense. AOC does not have historical data upon which to estimate the number of charges that might occur. AOC provides estimates of the average cost to the court for a charge by offense class. For every additional person charged with a Class 2 misdemeanor, the average cost to the court would be \$110.

The Office of Indigent Defense Services (IDS) has provided Fiscal Research with the frequency and cost of indigent defense services for each level of crime, including the cost differentials for district and superior

⁸ Due to the effective date of December 1, 2017 and the typical lag time between charge and conviction (6 months), little impact is assumed for CCS in FY 2017-18. Though some offenders may come under CCS supervision during this time, this note assumes an even entry over the course of FY 2018-19.

court with and without a trial and the percentage of cases handled in each category. Fiscal Research used this data to calculate a weighted average of IDS costs. In FY 2011-12, the most recent year data is available, 30% of Class 2 misdemeanor cases were handled through IDS. The weighted average cost of a Class 2 misdemeanor is \$201 per case for a private appointed counsel (PAC) attorney. This estimate assumes the appointment of a PAC attorney. In districts that have Public Defender offices, cases may be handled by those offices. In those instances, this cost may not be incurred.

Department of Public Safety – Prisons

This section expands the scope of an existing Class 2 misdemeanor offense. The North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission expects no impact on the prison population because all misdemeanor offenders who receive active sentences will serve them in the local jail.

Department of Public Safety – Community Corrections

All misdemeanor offenders may be given non-active (intermediate or community) sentences exclusively, or in conjunction with imprisonment (split-sentence). Sanctions include electronic house arrest, community service, substance abuse treatment, participation in educational or vocational skills development, payment of court costs, fines, and restitution, and short-term jail sentences not exceeding six days per month.

JRA essentially eliminated the distinction between "community" and "intermediate" supervision. Under structured sentencing, the two types of supervision were each defined by a set of specific sanctions. Under JRA, both community and intermediate probation may now include electronic monitoring, short-term periods of confinement, substance abuse assessment, monitoring, and treatment, participation in educational programs or vocational skills development. Whether a probationer is subject to more stringent conditions is determined by the results of a risk-needs assessment administered by the Department of Public Safety.

All types of post-release supervision, including intermediate or community sanctions, are supervised by the Community Corrections (CCS); CCS also oversees community service. General post-release supervision and supervision of intermediate and community offenders by a probation officer costs \$148 per offender, per month; no cost is assumed for those receiving unsupervised probation, or who are only ordered to pay fines, fees, or restitution. Total costs are based on average supervision length and the percentage of offenders (per offense class) sentenced to active sentences requiring post-release supervision, intermediate sanctions and supervised probation.

In FY 2015-16, 34% of Class 2 misdemeanor offenders received active sentences; 66% received probation. Active misdemeanor sentences are served in local jails and do not require any post-release supervision. The average length of probation imposed for this offense class was 14 months. Therefore, at a minimum, one Class 2 misdemeanor conviction resulting in probation will require at least 14 months of supervision. The cost of 14 months of supervision is \$2,072 per offender (\$148 per month times 14 months).9

SOURCES OF DATA: Department of Public Safety; Administrative Office of the Courts; North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission; Office of Indigent Defense Services.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS: None

FISCAL RESEARCH DIVISION: (919) 733-4910

⁹ Due to the effective date of December 1, 2017 and the typical lag time between charge and conviction (6 months), little impact is assumed for CCS in FY 2017-18. Though some offenders may come under CCS supervision during this time, this note assumes an even entry over the course of FY 2018-19.

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Mark Trogdon, Director Fiscal Research Division

DATE: March 31, 2017



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