

House Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Committee
2/12/2025

Bill: SB 24 – Child Abuse and Torture Amendments

Sponsor: Senator Don Ivory

Floor Sponsor: Representative Ryan Wilcox

UASD Position: Support

This Bill concerns child abuse and torture.

Discussion: Washington County Attorney Eric Clark, Child Abuse Pediatrician Dr. Antoinette Laskey, and Kristy Pike, Director of the Washington County Children’s Justice Center, presented alongside the sponsor. They highlighted the devastating impact of child torture, which is often perpetrated by a parent or guardian, and noted that this form of abuse is particularly difficult to overcome. For this reason, the Bill includes a mandatory minimum sentence, allowing the child time to heal before potentially facing their abuser at a parole hearing.

The Bill introduces a new criminal offense for child torture and establishes penalties for those convicted. It also adds child torture to the list of offenses subject to mandatory imprisonment. Additionally, the Bill amends existing definitions related to child abuse and aggravated criminal child abuse, and modifies statutes concerning child abandonment, the abuse or neglect of a child with a disability, and other areas that rely on specific definitions related to criminal child abuse. The Bill includes child torture in statutes concerning child abuse or aggravated child abuse, including those related to background checks, murder and aggravated murder, child abuse homicide, bigamy, jail release agreements, adoption, parent-time, and custody laws. The offense of child torture is further incorporated into the definition of "violent felony" and is designated as a registrable offense on the Sex, Kidnap, and Child Abuse Offender Registry. The Bill also revises the definition of "severe type of child abuse or neglect" in the Juvenile Code to align with the updated definition of serious injury in the criminal child abuse statute.

Detective Alexandra Clayton, from the Unified Police Department’s Special Victims Unit (SVU), testified on behalf of SVU detectives statewide, expressing support for the Bill. The Attorney General’s Office, the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (“UCCJJ”), the Victim Services Commission with UCCJJ, and the Salt Lake County District Attorney’s Office also voiced their support. The Defense Attorney’s Association expressed opposition to the mandatory minimum provision included in the Bill.

Yeas: 10

Nays: 0

N/V: 1

Outcome: SB 24 passed out of the Committee with a favorable recommendation.

Bill: 3rd substitute SB 81 – Care Provider Abuse Modifications

Sponsor: Senator Jen Plumb

Floor Sponsor: Representative Mark Strong

UASD Position: Support

This Bill addresses sexual misconduct between certain care providers and individuals experiencing a vulnerability.

Discussion: 3rd substitute SB 81 was not heard in Committee today. It will be placed on the next Committee agenda and heard on February 14th at 8 am.

Yeas:

Nays:

N/V:

Outcome: 3rd substitute SB 81 was not heard in Committee on February 12, 2025.