



## Andrew Warren calls for expansion of civil citations in Hillsborough County



MITCH PERRY

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A report issued by a children’s advocacy group last week singled out Hillsborough County as one of three outliers in the state when it comes to its propensity towards arresting juveniles. Unlike so many other counties in Florida who have adopted the use of writing out civil citations instead of arrests when it comes to juveniles, the [report](#) by the Children’s Campaign revealed that Hillsborough issued civil citations over arrests in only 32 percent of eligible cases in 2014-15, a dramatic number when compared across the bay in Pinellas, which issues citations 82 percent of the time.

Hillsborough County State Attorney Democratic candidate **Andrew Warren** is citing that report in calling on Tuesday for the increased use of civil citations in Hillsborough County.

“Over the past decade, cities across the country have implemented intelligent reforms aimed at decreasing violent crime, reducing recidivism, and restoring fairness to their systems,” Warren said. “We need to utilize what other prosecutors’ offices have done and replicate that success in Hillsborough.”

Warren is a former federal prosecutor with the Department of Justice who stepped down last fall to challenge GOP incumbent **Mark Ober**.

“Our system in Hillsborough is outdated; we’re like the rotary phone of criminal justice,” Warren said (a line he uttered at a Tiger Bay debate against Ober earlier this month). “And we’re in need of an upgrade. We need to modernize and improve our system by embracing innovative reforms that have become commonplace in other major cities, starting with civil citations for first-time misdemeanor offenders.”

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AS STATE ATTORNEY, I WOULD WORK WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT TO INCREASE THE USE OF CIVIL CITATIONS TO ENSURE THAT WE'RE ARRESTING FIRST-TIME OFFENDING JUVENILES FOR MISDEMEANORS ONLY IN THE RARE AND EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE IT'S WARRANTED," WARREN CONTINUED. "I WOULD ALSO PARTNER WITH THIRD-PARTY AGENCIES AND THE SCHOOL BOARD TO ENCOURAGE ALLOWING SCHOOLS AND PARENTS TO HANDLE LOW-LEVEL OFFENSES THAT OCCUR ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, RATHER THAN INVOLVING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM."

The Children's Campaign report comes on the heels of another report by the group [Faith in Florida](#), which showed that the per capita jail population in Hillsborough increased by 45 percent between 1985 and 2014.

Warren said too many independent reports are finding that the county is behind the curve in too many areas. "Hillsborough can't continue to operate in a bubble and pat ourselves on the back even though independent agencies have given us failing grades," he said. It's time to accept reality and make the necessary changes to improve our system."

Perhaps aware their policies are more conservative than similar agencies in the Tampa Bay area, the Hillsborough County Sheriffs Department [announced](#) last month that they had enacted a year-long pilot program with other local agencies that will offer an alternative to arrest for first-time offenders caught with marijuana between the ages of 8 to 17.

The Delinquent Act Citation Pilot Program (DAC Pilot Program) is a Hillsborough County alternative to arrest and a possible criminal record for juveniles found to be in possession of 20 grams or less of marijuana, or possession of drug paraphernalia. The program will run through July 31, 2017. It's a cooperative effort between the offices of the state attorney, public defender, Hillsborough County Sheriff, Temple Terrace Police Department, Plant City Police Department, the administrative office of the courts and the clerk of the circuit court.



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