SENATE, No. 3616

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 23, 2023

Sponsored by:
Senator MICHAEL L. TESTA, JR.
District 1 (Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes rebuttable presumption that person charged with motor vehicle theft be detained prior to trial; imposes mandatory sentencing for thefts involving motor vehicle.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT concerning pretrial detention and mandatory sentencing for certain motor vehicle-related thefts and amending N.J.S.2C:43-6 and P.L.2014, c.31.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. Section 4 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-18) is amended to read as follows:

4. a. (1) The court may order, before trial, the detention of an eligible defendant charged with any crime, or any offense involving domestic violence as defined in subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.1991, c.261 (C.2C:25-19), enumerated in subsection a. of section 5 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-19), if the prosecutor seeks the pretrial detention of the eligible defendant under section 5 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-19) and after a hearing pursuant to that section the court finds clear and convincing evidence that no amount of monetary bail, non-monetary conditions of pretrial release or combination of monetary bail and conditions would reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process. The court may also order the pretrial detention of an eligible defendant when the prosecutor moves for a pretrial detention hearing and the eligible defendant fails to rebut a presumption of pretrial detention that may be established for the crimes enumerated under subsection b. of section 5 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-19).

(2) For purposes of ordering the pretrial detention of an eligible defendant pursuant to this section and section 5 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-19) or pursuant to section 10 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-24), when determining whether no amount of monetary bail, non-monetary conditions or combination of monetary bail and conditions would reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, or that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process, the court may consider the amount of monetary bail only with respect to whether it will, by itself or in combination with non-monetary conditions, reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required.

b. Regarding the pretrial detention hearing moved for by the prosecutor, except for when an eligible defendant is charged with a crime set forth under paragraph (1) **[**or**]**, (2)<u>, or (3)</u> of subsection b.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined <u>thus</u> is new matter.

of section 5 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-19), there shall be a rebuttable presumption that some amount of monetary bail, non-monetary conditions of pretrial release or combination of monetary bail and conditions would reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process.

c. An eligible defendant may appeal an order of pretrial detention pursuant to the Rules of Court. The appeal shall be heard in an expedited manner. The eligible defendant shall be detained pending the disposition of the appeal.

d. If the court does not order the pretrial detention of an eligible defendant at the conclusion of the pretrial detention hearing under this section and section 5 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-19), the court shall order the release of the eligible defendant pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-17).

(cf: P.L.2014, c.31, s.4)

2. Section 5 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-19) is amended to read as follows:

5. a. A prosecutor may file a motion with the court at any time, including any time before or after an eligible defendant's release pursuant to section 3 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-17), seeking the pretrial detention of an eligible defendant for:

(1) any crime of the first or second degree enumerated under subsection d. of section 2 of P.L.1997, c.117 (C.2C:43-7.2);

(2) any crime for which the eligible defendant would be subject to an ordinary or extended term of life imprisonment;

(3) any crime if the eligible defendant has been convicted of two or more offenses under paragraph (1) or (2) of this subsection;

(4) any crime enumerated under paragraph (2) of subsection b. of section 2 of P.L.1994, c.133 (C.2C:7-2) or crime involving human trafficking pursuant to section 1 of P.L.2005, c.77 (C.2C:13-8) or P.L.2013, c.51 (C.52:17B-237 et al.) when the victim is a minor, or the crime of endangering the welfare of a child under N.J.S.2C:24-4;

(5) any crime enumerated under subsection c. of N.J.S.2C:43-6;

(6) any crime or offense involving domestic violence as defined in subsection a. of section 3 of P.L.1991, c.261 (C.2C:25-19); or

(7) any other crime for which the prosecutor believes there is a serious risk that:

(a) the eligible defendant will not appear in court as required;

(b) the eligible defendant will pose a danger to any other person or the community; **[**or**]**

(c) the eligible defendant will obstruct or attempt to obstruct justice, or threaten, injure, or intimidate, or attempt to threaten, injure or intimidate, a prospective witness or juror; or

(8) theft of a motor vehicle pursuant to N.J.S.20-2.

b. When a motion for pretrial detention is filed pursuant to subsection a. of this section, there shall be a rebuttable presumption that the eligible defendant shall be detained pending trial because no amount of monetary bail, non-monetary condition or combination of monetary bail and conditions would reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process, if the court finds probable cause that the eligible defendant:

(1) committed murder pursuant to N.J.S.2C:11-3; **[**or**]**

(2) committed any crime for which the eligible defendant would be subject to an ordinary or extended term of life imprisonment; or

(3) theft of a motor vehicle pursuant to N.J.S.2C:20-2.

c. A court shall hold a hearing to determine whether any amount of monetary bail or non-monetary conditions or combination of monetary bail and conditions, including those set forth under subsection b. of section 3 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-17) will reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process.

d. (1) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the pretrial detention hearing shall be held no later than the eligible defendant's first appearance unless the eligible defendant, or the prosecutor, seeks a continuance. If a prosecutor files a motion for pretrial detention after the eligible defendant's first appearance has taken place or if no first appearance is required, the court shall schedule the pretrial detention hearing to take place within three working days of the date on which the prosecutor's motion was filed, unless the prosecutor or the eligible defendant seeks a continuance. Except for good cause, a continuance on motion of the eligible defendant may not exceed five days, not including any intermediate Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. Except for good cause, a continuance on motion of the prosecutor may not exceed three days, not including any intermediate Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday.

(2) Upon the filing of a motion by the prosecutor seeking the pretrial detention of the eligible defendant and during any continuance that may be granted by the court, the eligible defendant shall be detained in jail, unless the eligible defendant was previously released from custody before trial, in which case the court shall issue a notice to appear to compel the appearance of the eligible defendant at the detention hearing. The court, on motion of the prosecutor or sua sponte, may order that, while in custody, an eligible defendant who appears to be a drug-dependent person receive an assessment to determine whether that eligible defendant is drug-dependent.

e. (1) At the pretrial detention hearing, the eligible defendant has the right to be represented by counsel, and, if financially unable to obtain adequate representation, to have counsel appointed. The eligible defendant shall be afforded an opportunity to testify, to present witnesses, to cross-examine witnesses who appear at the hearing, and to present information by proffer or otherwise. The rules concerning admissibility of evidence in criminal trials shall not apply to the presentation and consideration of information at the hearing.

(2) In pretrial detention proceedings for which there is no indictment, the prosecutor shall establish probable cause that the eligible defendant committed the predicate offense. A presumption of pretrial detention as provided in subsection b. of this section may be rebutted by proof provided by the eligible defendant, the prosecutor, or from other materials submitted to the court. The standard of proof for a rebuttal of the presumption of pretrial detention shall be a preponderance of the evidence. If proof cannot be established to rebut the presumption, the court may order the eligible defendant's pretrial detention. If the presumption is rebutted by sufficient proof, the prosecutor shall have the opportunity to establish that the grounds for pretrial detention exist pursuant to this section.

(3) Except when an eligible defendant has failed to rebut a presumption of pretrial detention pursuant to subsection b. of this section, the court's finding to support an order of pretrial detention pursuant to section 4 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-18) that no amount of monetary bail, non-monetary conditions or combination of monetary bail and conditions will reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, and that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process shall be supported by clear and convincing evidence.

f. The hearing may be reopened, before or after a determination by the court, at any time before trial, if the court finds that information exists that was not known to the prosecutor or the eligible defendant at the time of the hearing and that has a material bearing on the issue of whether there are conditions of release that will reasonably assure the eligible defendant's appearance in court when required, the protection of the safety of any other person or the community, or that the eligible defendant will not obstruct or attempt to obstruct the criminal justice process.

g. When a motion for pretrial detention is filed pursuant to subsection a. of this section, a pretrial recommendation of no release pursuant to subsection f. of section 6 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-20) may constitute prima facie evidence to overcome the presumption of release as set forth in subsection b. of section 4 of P.L.2014, c.31 (C.2A:162-18), if the court finds probable cause that the eligible defendant committed any crime for which the eligible

defendant would be subject to a mandatory term of imprisonment pursuant to subsection c. of N.J.S.2C:43-6 for a crime involving the use or possession of a firearm other than a violation of:

(1) subsection a. or d. of N.J.S.2C:39-3;

(2) paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection a. of N.J.S.2C:39-4;

(3) subsection a. of section 1 of P.L. 1998, c.26 (C.2C:39-4.1); or

(4) paragraph (1) of subsection b. or paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection c. of N.J.S.2C:39-5.

(cf: P.L. 2022, c.43, s.1)

3. N.J.S.2C:43-6 is amended to read as follows:

2C:43-6. a. Except as otherwise provided, a person who has been convicted of a crime may be sentenced to imprisonment, as follows:

(1) In the case of a crime of the first degree, for a specific term of years which shall be fixed by the court and shall be between 10 years and 20 years;

(2) In the case of a crime of the second degree, for a specific term of years which shall be fixed by the court and shall be between five years and 10 years;

(3) In the case of a crime of the third degree, for a specific term of years which shall be fixed by the court and shall be between three years and five years;

(4) In the case of a crime of the fourth degree, for a specific term which shall be fixed by the court and shall not exceed 18 months.

b. As part of a sentence for any crime, where the court is clearly convinced that the aggravating factors substantially outweigh the mitigating factors, as set forth in subsections a. and b. of 2C:44-1, or the court finds that the aggravating factor set forth in paragraph (5) of subsection a. of N.J.S.2C:44-1 applies, the court may fix a minimum term not to exceed one-half of the term set pursuant to subsection a., or one-half of the term set pursuant to a maximum period of incarceration for a crime set forth in any statute other than this code, during which the defendant shall not be eligible for parole; provided that no defendant shall be eligible for parole at a date earlier than otherwise provided by the law governing parole.

c. A person who has been convicted under subsection b. or d. of N.J.S.2C:39-3, subsection a. of N.J.S.2C:39-4, subsection a. of section 1 of P.L.1998, c.26 (C.2C:39-4.1), subsection a., b., c., or f. of N.J.S.2C:39-5, subsection a. or paragraph (2) or (3) of subsection b. of section 6 of P.L.1979, c.179 (C.2C:39-7), or subsection a., b., e. or g. of N.J.S.2C:39-9, or of a crime under any of the following sections: 2C:11-3, 2C:11-4, 2C:12-1b., 2C:13-1, 2C:14-2a., 2C:14-3a., 2C:15-1, 2C:18-2, 2C:29-5, who, while in the course of committing or attempting to commit the crime, including the immediate flight therefrom, used or was in possession of a firearm

as defined in 2C:39-1f., shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment by the court. The term of imprisonment shall include the imposition of a minimum term. The minimum term shall be fixed at one-half of the sentence imposed by the court or 42 months, whichever is greater, or 18 months in the case of a fourth degree crime, during which the defendant shall be ineligible for parole.

The minimum terms established by this section shall not prevent the court from imposing presumptive terms of imprisonment pursuant to 2C:44-1f. (1) except in cases of crimes of the fourth degree.

A person who has been convicted of an offense enumerated by this subsection and who used or possessed a firearm during its commission, attempted commission or flight therefrom and who has been previously convicted of an offense involving the use or possession of a firearm as defined in 2C:44-3d., shall be sentenced by the court to an extended term as authorized by 2C:43-7c., notwithstanding that extended terms are ordinarily discretionary with the court.

d. (1) The court shall not impose a mandatory sentence pursuant to subsection c. of this section, 2C:43-7c. or 2C:44-3d., unless the ground therefor has been established at a hearing. At the hearing, which may occur at the time of sentencing, the prosecutor shall establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the weapon used or possessed was a firearm. In making its finding, the court shall take judicial notice of any evidence, testimony or information adduced at the trial, plea hearing, or other court proceedings and shall also consider the presentence report and any other relevant information.

(2) The court shall not impose a mandatory sentence pursuant to subsection c. of this section for a violation of paragraph (2) of subsection b. of N.J.S.2C:39-5; a violation of paragraph (2) of subsection c. of N.J.S.2C:39-5, if that rifle or shotgun is in the nature of an air gun, spring gun or pistol or other weapon of a similar nature in which the propelling force is a spring, elastic band, carbon dioxide, compressed or other gas or vapor, air or compressed air, or is ignited by compressed air, and ejecting a bullet or missile smaller than three-eighths of an inch in diameter, with sufficient force to injure a person; or a violation of paragraph (1) of subsection c. of N.J.S.2C:39-5.

e. A person convicted of a third or subsequent offense involving State taxes under N.J.S.2C:20-9, N.J.S.2C:21-15, any other provision of this code, or under any of the provisions of Title 54 of the Revised Statutes, or Title 54A of the New Jersey Statutes, as amended and supplemented, shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment by the court. This shall not preclude an application for and imposition of an extended term of imprisonment under N.J.S.2C:44-3 if the provisions of that section are applicable to the offender.

f. A person convicted of manufacturing, distributing, dispensing or possessing with intent to distribute any dangerous substance or controlled substance analog under N.J.S.2C:35-5, of maintaining or operating a controlled dangerous substance production facility under N.J.S.2C:35-4, of employing a juvenile in a drug distribution scheme under N.J.S.2C:35-6, leader of a narcotics trafficking network under N.J.S.2C:35-3, or of distributing, dispensing or possessing with intent to distribute on or near school property or buses under section 1 of P.L.1987, c.101 (C.2C:35-7), who has been previously convicted of manufacturing, distributing, dispensing or possessing with intent to distribute a controlled dangerous substance or controlled substance analog, shall upon application of the prosecuting attorney be sentenced by the court to an extended term as authorized by subsection c. of N.J.S.2C:43-7, notwithstanding that extended terms are ordinarily discretionary with the court. The term of imprisonment shall, except as may be provided in N.J.S.2C:35-12, include the imposition of a minimum term. The minimum term shall be fixed at, or between, one-third and one-half of the sentence imposed by the court or three years, whichever is greater, not less than seven years if the person is convicted of a violation of N.J.S.2C:35-6, or 18 months in the case of a fourth degree crime, during which the defendant shall be ineligible for parole.

The court shall not impose an extended term pursuant to this subsection unless the ground therefor has been established at a hearing. At the hearing, which may occur at the time of sentencing, the prosecutor shall establish the ground therefor by a preponderance of the evidence. In making its finding, the court shall take judicial notice of any evidence, testimony or information adduced at the trial, plea hearing, or other court proceedings and shall also consider the presentence report and any other relevant information.

For the purpose of this subsection, a previous conviction exists where the actor has at any time been convicted under chapter 35 of this title or Title 24 of the Revised Statutes or under any similar statute of the United States, this State, or any other state for an offense that is substantially equivalent to N.J.S.2C:35-3, N.J.S.2C:35-4, N.J.S.2C:35-5, N.J.S.2C:35-6 or section 1 of P.L.1987, c.101 (C.2C:35-7).

g. Any person who has been convicted under subsection a. of N.J.S.2C:39-4 or of a crime under any of the following sections: N.J.S.2C:11-3, N.J.S.2C:11-4, N.J.S.2C:12-1b., N.J.S.2C:13-1, N.J.S.2C:14-2a., N.J.S.2C:14-3a., N.J.S.2C:15-1, N.J.S.2C:18-2, N.J.S.2C:29-5, N.J.S.2C:35-5 who, while in the course of committing or attempting to commit the crime, including the immediate flight therefrom, used or was in possession of a machine gun or assault firearm shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment by the court. The term of imprisonment shall include the

imposition of a minimum term. The minimum term shall be fixed at 10 years for a crime of the first or second degree, five years for a crime of the third degree, or 18 months in the case of a fourth degree crime, during which the defendant shall be ineligible for parole.

The minimum terms established by this section shall not prevent the court from imposing presumptive terms of imprisonment pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection f. of N.J.S.2C:44-1 for crimes of the first degree.

A person who has been convicted of an offense enumerated in this subsection and who used or possessed a machine gun or assault firearm during its commission, attempted commission or flight therefrom and who has been previously convicted of an offense involving the use or possession of any firearm as defined in subsection d. of N.J.S.2C:44-3, shall be sentenced by the court to an extended term as authorized by subsection d. of N.J.S.2C:43-7, notwithstanding that extended terms are ordinarily discretionary with the court.

h. The court shall not impose a mandatory sentence pursuant to subsection g. of this section, subsection d. of N.J.S.2C:43-7 or N.J.S.2C:44-3, unless the ground therefor has been established at a hearing. At the hearing, which may occur at the time of sentencing, the prosecutor shall establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the weapon used or possessed was a machine gun or assault firearm. In making its finding, the court shall take judicial notice of any evidence, testimony or information adduced at the trial, plea hearing, or other court proceedings and shall also consider the presentence report and any other relevant information.

i. A person who has been convicted under paragraph (6) of subsection b. of 2C:12-1 of causing bodily injury while eluding shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment by the court. The term of imprisonment shall include the imposition of a minimum term. The minimum term shall be fixed at, or between one-third and one-half of the sentence imposed by the court. The minimum term established by this subsection shall not prevent the court from imposing a presumptive term of imprisonment pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection f. of 2C:44-1.

<u>j. A person convicted pursuant to paragraph (2) of subsection b. of N.J.S.2C:20-2 of theft of an automobile, or pursuant to subsections b. or c. of N.J.S.2C:20-10 shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment by the court. The term of imprisonment shall include the imposition of a minimum term. The minimum term shall be fixed at, or between, one-third and one-half of the sentence imposed by the court. For a second conviction of a crime of the third degree, the minimum term shall be fixed at one-half of the sentence imposed by the court, or 30 months, whichever is greater. For a second conviction of a crime of the fourth degree, the minimum term shall be fixed at one-half of the sentence imposed by</u>

the court or nine months, whichever is greater. For a third or subsequent conviction, the minimum term shall be fixed at five years for a crime of the third degree, and 18 months for a crime of the fourth degree.

(cf: P.L.2013, c.113, s.2)

4. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes a rebuttable presumption that a person charged with theft of a motor vehicle is to be detained prior to trial, and imposes mandatory sentencing for motor vehicle theft under N.J.S.2C:20-2, and unlawful taking of a means of conveyance, or "joyriding," under N.J.S.2C:20-10.

Under current law, a person is guilty of theft of a motor vehicle if the person unlawfully takes, or exercises unlawful control over, another person's motor vehicle with the purpose to deprive that person of the motor vehicle. Theft of a motor vehicle is a crime of the third degree ordinarily punishable by up to five years imprisonment, a fine of up to $15,000, or both.

Under P.L.2014, c.31, also known as the "Criminal Justice Reform Law," criminal courts are authorized to order the pretrial release of a defendant pending further proceedings, or order pretrial detention of defendants who are found to be a flight risk, a danger to another or the community, or likely to obstruct further criminal proceedings.

Under this bill, if a court finds probable cause that a defendant was guilty of theft of a motor vehicle, there would be a rebuttable presumption that the person is to be detained pending trial because no amount of monetary bail, non-monetary conditions of release, or combination thereof would reasonably assure the safety of any other person or the community. The presumption may be rebutted by the defendant upon a showing of a preponderance of the evidence in support of the defendant.

This rebuttable presumption applies under current law when a prosecutor makes a motion for the pretrial detention of a defendant charged with murder or any crime for which the defendant would be subject to an ordinary or extended term of life imprisonment.

The bill further imposes mandatory sentencing for motor vehicle theft under N.J.S.2C:20-2, and unlawful taking of a means of conveyance, or "joyriding," under N.J.S.2C:20-10. Under the bill, the term of imprisonment is to include the imposition of a minimum term fixed at, or between, one-third and one-half of the sentence imposed by the court. For a second conviction under either statute, the minimum term is to be fixed at one-half of the sentence imposed by the court, or 30 months for a crime of the third degree,

whichever is greater. For a second conviction of a crime of the fourth degree, a minimum term fixed at one half of the sentence imposed by the court or nine months, whichever is greater. For a third or subsequent conviction, the minimum term shall be fixed at five years, for a crime of the third degree, and 18 months for a crime of the fourth degree.

Under paragraph (2) of subsection b. of N.J.S.2C:20-2, theft of a motor vehicle is currently graded as a crime of the third degree which is ordinarily punishable by three to five years imprisonment, a fine of up to $10,000 or both. Under N.J.S.2C:20-10 the unlawful taking of a motor vehicle is graded as a crime of the third or the fourth degree depending on the attendant circumstances. Under subsection e. of N.J.S.2C:44-1, theft of a motor vehicle and unlawful taking of a means of conveyance are presently excluded from the presumption of non-imprisonment ordinarily applicable to a crime of the third or fourth degree, meaning there is no presumption either of imprisonment or non-imprisonment.

It is the sponsors' view that imposing mandatory sentencing for these crimes is necessary to eliminate the incentive to commit a motor vehicle theft offense with no risk of incarceration.