

## Tougher Penalties for Gang Crime

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A national organization has come to North Carolina to argue against what it calls harsh penalties in a bill in the General Assembly designed to crack down on street gangs.

Crimes such as robbery and assault would carry stiffer penalties when they are part of gang activity if a bill in a Senate committee is approved. Law enforcement agencies support the idea but a national group called Families Against Mandatory Minimums doesn't. Spokeswoman Laura Sager told the committee judges should have discretion. She claimed there would be a disproportionate impact on youth of color and the mentally ill. Sager said mandatory minimums haven't solved the drug problem and won't solve the gang problem.