

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 256
Judiciary

(Prince George's County Delegation)

**Prince George's County - Landlord-Tenant Cases - Alternative Dispute
Resolution Program**
PG 409-18

This bill establishes a program for “alternative dispute resolution” of landlord-tenant cases in the District Court for Prince George’s County. The Chief Judge of the District Court may adopt rules to implement the bill.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect State government operations or finances, as discussed below.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances, as discussed below.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: “Alternative dispute resolution” (ADR) means the process of resolving matters in pending litigation through arbitration, mediation, neutral case evaluation, neutral factfinding, settlement conference, or a combination of those processes.

The District Court’s ADR Office provides mediation and settlement conferences for civil cases in many District Court locations. The services are offered at no charge, either on the day of trial or before the trial date. The Judiciary advises that volunteers for existing ADR programs in Prince George’s County contribute an average of 950 hours annually.

The District Court for Baltimore City had a Rent Court ADR pilot program between April 2016 and September 2016. During the course of the program, there were 73 requests for ADR services; an agreement was reached in 81% (30 out of 37) of the cases that went to mediation.

In fiscal 2017, 154,841 landlord-tenant cases were filed in the District Court for Prince George's County.

State/Local Fiscal Effect: For purposes of this fiscal and policy note, it is assumed that the ADR program implemented pursuant to the bill is similar to other civil ADR programs in the District Court. Accordingly, any increase in workload for the District Court's ADR Office and any costs to create, implement, and maintain a new ADR program, such as additional mileage, postage, training, and orientation costs, can be absorbed within existing budgeted resources. Parking costs for additional volunteers, which the District Court estimates at up to \$2,000 annually, can also be absorbed within existing budgeted resources. The District Court further anticipates that a program may be implemented by the end of the 2018 calendar year.

Prince George's County advises that because the District Court is a State-funded entity, it anticipates no additional costs. It also indicates that the county's Office of Human Relations (OHR) offers ADR services for county residents. While it is possible that some cases may be diverted from OHR to the District Court, mitigating a minimal amount of expenditures, it is unlikely that such impact materially affects local government finances and operations.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Prince George's County; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Legislative Services

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nb/kdm

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