

**Department of Legislative Services**  
 Maryland General Assembly  
 2019 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 555 (Senator Ready)  
 Judicial Proceedings

**Peace Orders - Workplace Violence**

This bill authorizes an employer to file a petition for a peace order that alleges the commission of specified acts against the petitioner’s employee at the employee’s workplace. It extends existing statutory provisions relating to the filing, issuance, and modification of peace orders, as well as the shielding of related court records, to peace orders filed by employers on this basis. An employer is immune from any civil liability that may result from the failure of the employer to file a petition for a peace order on behalf of an employee.

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** General fund expenditures for the Judiciary increase by \$123,100 in FY 2020 only for programming changes. It is anticipated that revenues are not materially affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	123,100	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$123,100)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

*Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease*

**Local Effect:** The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local operations or finances.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

**Analysis**

**Current Law:** An individual who does not meet specified relationship requirements under the domestic violence protective order statutes may file a petition for a peace order with the District Court or the District Court commissioner that alleges the commission of

specified acts against the petitioner by the respondent, if the act occurred within 30 days before the filing of the petition. Such acts include an act that causes serious bodily harm, an act that places the petitioner in fear of imminent serious bodily harm, harassment, stalking, trespass, and malicious destruction of property.

After a final peace order hearing, if a judge finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the respondent has committed, and is likely to commit in the future, one of the specified acts against the petitioner, or if the respondent consents to the entry of a peace order, the court may issue a final peace order to protect the petitioner. The order must contain only the relief that is minimally necessary to protect the petitioner. A final peace order can order the respondent to (1) refrain from committing or threatening to commit specified acts; (2) refrain from contacting, attempting to contact, or harassing the petitioner; (3) refrain from entering the residence of the petitioner; or (4) remain away from the place of employment, school, or temporary residence of the petitioner. Final peace orders can also direct the respondent or petitioner to participate in counseling or mediation and order either party to pay filing fees and costs. Relief granted in a final peace order is effective for the period stated in the order, but may not exceed six months. Statutory provisions set forth circumstances under which a final peace order may be modified, rescinded, or extended.

An individual who fails to comply with specified provisions of an interim, temporary, or final peace order is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to maximum penalties of a \$1,000 fine and/or 90 days imprisonment for a first offense and a \$2,500 fine and/or one year imprisonment for a second or subsequent offense.

Statutory provisions set forth a process by which court records regarding peace order proceedings may be shielded.

**Background:** In fiscal 2018, the District Court granted 6,608 interim peace orders, 13,967 temporary peace orders, and 5,157 final peace orders.

**State Revenues:** Any potential minimal increase in general fund revenues from the filing of additional peace orders is not anticipated to materially impact State finances, as the number of additional petitioners generated by the bill is likely to be minimal.

**State Expenditures:** General fund expenditures increase by \$123,074 in fiscal 2020 only for the Judiciary to make necessary programming changes. Otherwise, although the bill may minimally increase the number of peace order petitions filed, it is not anticipated to materially affect the workload of the District Court.

**Local Revenues:** Any potential minimal increase in local revenues increase from fees associated with the service of additional peace orders is not anticipated to materially impact local finances.

**Local Expenditures:** It is anticipated that local law enforcement can use existing resources to serve any additional peace orders.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 640 (Delegates Atterbeary and Dumais) - Judiciary.

**Information Source(s):** Harford and Montgomery counties; Maryland Association of Counties; City of College Park; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Office of the Public Defender; Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 26, 2019  
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