

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader

House Bill 592
 Judiciary

(Delegate Clippinger, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Prince George's County - Judgeships - Circuit Courts

This bill alters the number of resident judges of the circuit court by adding one additional judgeship in Prince George’s County. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by approximately \$366,100 in FY 2025 for one additional judge and associated staff; the FY 2025 budget as introduced by the General Assembly includes funding for this purpose. Future year expenditures reflect annualization and inflation. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	366,100	471,800	478,900	486,000	493,400
Net Effect	(\$366,100)	(\$471,800)	(\$478,900)	(\$486,000)	(\$493,400)

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

Local Effect: Prince George’s County expenditures increase beginning in FY 2025. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: There are 175 circuit court judges in the State, including 24 in Prince George’s County.

To support the General Assembly’s role in establishing new judgeships, the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of Maryland annually certifies to the General Assembly the need for additional judges in the State. The Judiciary uses best practices developed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to calculate judicial need, which take into account the amount of judicial work generated on average per case filing within each distinct case type. Using the model developed by NCSC, judicial need for fiscal 2025 was primarily based on new case filings mostly unaffected by the COVID pandemic (fiscal 2018, 2019, and 2023). Although certification of judicial workloads indicates a projected need of six additional judges throughout the State (three in circuit courts (including the judgeship added by the bill)/three in the District Court), the Judiciary is requesting one judge position for Prince George’s County, as it is deemed to be in most critical need of additional judicial resources. An additional judgeship was last created by Chapters 656 and 657 of 2023, which added one circuit court judge in Baltimore County.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$366,127 in fiscal 2025, which assumes a 90-day start-up delay. This estimate reflects the cost of creating one circuit court judgeship in Prince George’s County and the associated positions of one courtroom clerk and one law clerk with the judgeship (a total of three positions). It includes salaries, fringe benefits, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses.

Positions	3.0
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$334,359
Operating Expenses	<u>21,768</u>
Total FY 2025 State Expenditures	\$366,127

Future year expenditures generally reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover as well as annual increases in ongoing operating expenses. However, pursuant to Joint Resolutions 2 and 3 of 2022, judicial salaries have been set in statute through fiscal 2026. Because future increases in judicial salaries depend on any recommendations proposed by the Judicial Compensation Commission and subsequent action by the General Assembly, judicial salaries beyond fiscal 2026 do not account for additional increases.

Local Expenditures: The counties are responsible for funding certain operating expenses of the circuit courts, including the salaries and operating expenses of administrative assistants for circuit court judges. Therefore, Prince George’s County expenditures increase beginning in fiscal 2025 to reflect the addition of the new judgeship, including costs associated with an administrative assistant for the judge.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 688 (Senator Smith)(By Request - Maryland Judicial Conference) - Judicial Proceedings.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 13, 2024
rh/jkb Third Reader - March 14, 2024

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