

HOUSE BILL 978

D1

4lr2871

By: **Delegates Young, Acevero, Conaway, Pasteur, and Taylor**

Introduced and read first time: February 2, 2024

Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Courts – Maryland Court Text Message System – Establishing, Implementing,**
3 **and Maintaining**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Court Text Message System; requiring the
5 Administrative Office of the Courts to establish, implement, and maintain the
6 System; requiring the System to be made available to certain individuals; requiring
7 an individual to opt in to receive text messages through the System; requiring the
8 court to send out certain messages through the System; requiring the court to adhere
9 to certain privacy and data protection and security standards; requiring the Office
10 to submit a certain implementation plan to the General Assembly on or before a
11 certain date; and generally relating to the Maryland Court Text Message System.

12 BY adding to

13 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings

14 Section 14–101 through 14–105 to be under the new title “Title 14. Maryland Court
15 Text Message System”

16 Annotated Code of Maryland

17 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

18 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
19 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

20 **Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings**

21 **TITLE 14. MARYLAND COURT TEXT MESSAGE SYSTEM.**

22 **14–101.**

23 **(A) IN THIS TITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
24 **INDICATED.**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (B) "COURT" MEANS THE SUPREME COURT OF MARYLAND, THE
2 APPELLATE COURT OF MARYLAND, A CIRCUIT COURT OF A COUNTY, THE DISTRICT
3 COURT OF MARYLAND, AN ORPHANS' COURT OF A COUNTY, OR THE MARYLAND TAX
4 COURT.

5 (C) "OFFICE" MEANS THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS.

6 (D) "SYSTEM" MEANS THE MARYLAND COURT TEXT MESSAGE SYSTEM.

7 14-102.

8 (A) THERE IS A MARYLAND COURT TEXT MESSAGE SYSTEM.

9 (B) THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS:

10 (1) SHALL ESTABLISH, IMPLEMENT, AND MAINTAIN THE SYSTEM;

11 AND

12 (2) MAY ADOPT RULES GOVERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION AND
13 OPERATION OF THE SYSTEM, INCLUDING THE FUNDING FOR THE SYSTEM.

14 (C) THE PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM IS TO SEND TEXT MESSAGES WITH
15 IMPORTANT COURT-RELATED APPOINTMENTS, PROCEEDINGS, AND
16 ANNOUNCEMENTS TO INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE OPTED IN TO RECEIVE THE TEXT
17 MESSAGES.

18 14-103.

19 (A) (1) THE SYSTEM SHALL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL INDIVIDUALS
20 WITH PENDING COURT DATES, INCLUDING:

21 (I) DEFENDANTS;

22 (II) PLAINTIFFS;

23 (III) WITNESSES;

24 (IV) JURORS; AND

25 (V) ANY OTHER INDIVIDUALS REQUIRED TO APPEAR IN COURT.

1 **(2) AN INDIVIDUAL MUST OPT IN TO RECEIVE TEXT MESSAGES**
2 **THROUGH THE SYSTEM.**

3 **(B) (1) THE COURT SHALL SEND OUT THE TEXT MESSAGES THROUGH THE**
4 **SYSTEM TO ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE OPTED IN TO RECEIVE THE TEXT**
5 **MESSAGES.**

6 **(2) THE TEXT MESSAGES REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS**
7 **SUBSECTION SHALL INCLUDE:**

8 **(I) COURT DATES FOR CRIMINAL, CIVIL, AND FAMILY LAW**
9 **PROCEEDINGS;**

10 **(II) JURY DUTY SUMMONSES AND INSTRUCTIONS;**

11 **(III) SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS WITH COURT OFFICIALS OR**
12 **MANDATORY COURT-ORDERED PROGRAMS;**

13 **(IV) DEADLINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF LEGAL DOCUMENTS**
14 **OR PAYMENTS; AND**

15 **(V) ANY OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS THE COURT**
16 **DEEMS APPROPRIATE AND NECESSARY.**

17 **(C) THE COURT SHALL ADHERE TO ALL PRIVACY AND DATA PROTECTION**
18 **SECURITY STANDARDS, INCLUDING BY:**

19 **(1) ENSURING ALL PERSONAL INFORMATION COLLECTED UNDER**
20 **THIS TITLE IS USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS TITLE; AND**

21 **(2) KEEPING ALL IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ABOUT AN INDIVIDUAL**
22 **WHO OPTED IN TO JOIN THE SYSTEM CONFIDENTIAL UNLESS THE INDIVIDUAL**
23 **CONSENTS TO SHARE THE INFORMATION WITH A THIRD PARTY.**

24 **14-104.**

25 **(A) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2024, THE OFFICE SHALL SUBMIT TO THE**
26 **GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT**
27 **ARTICLE, A DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE SYSTEM, INCLUDING:**

28 **(1) BUDGET REQUIREMENTS;**

29 **(2) STAFFING NEEDS;**

1 **(3) TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE CAPABILITIES; AND**

2 **(4) ANY OTHER INFORMATION THE OFFICE DEEMS NECESSARY AND**
3 **APPROPRIATE.**

4 **(B) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2027, AND ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1**
5 **EACH YEAR THEREAFTER, THE OFFICE SHALL REPORT TO THE GENERAL**
6 **ASSEMBLY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE,**
7 **ON:**

8 **(1) THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM, INCLUDING:**

9 **(I) WHETHER THE SYSTEM REDUCES THE**
10 **FAILURE-TO-APPEAR RATES AND NO-SHOW RATES IN COURT; AND**

11 **(II) THE IMPACT OF THE SYSTEM ON JURY DUTY ATTENDANCE;**

12 **(2) THE SYSTEM'S IMPACT ON THE EFFICIENCY OF COURT**
13 **PROCEEDINGS; AND**

14 **(3) BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2026, AND EACH FISCAL YEAR**
15 **THEREAFTER, ANY IMPROVEMENTS THAT SHOULD BE MADE TO THE SYSTEM.**

16 **14-105.**

17 **BEGINNING IN FISCAL YEAR 2026, AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE**
18 **GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF**
19 **\$500,000 FOR THE OFFICE TO ESTABLISH, IMPLEMENT, AND MAINTAIN THE**
20 **SYSTEM.**

21 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
22 1, 2024.