

Department of Fiscal Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 626 (Senator Della)
Judicial Proceedings

Baltimore City - District Court Judges

This bill requires the Administrative Judge in the District Court in Baltimore City to designate: (1) at least two judges to preside during the evening hours; and (2) at least two judges to the housing court.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Indeterminate. (See below.)

Local Effect: Indeterminate. Any potential additional costs or savings for Baltimore City, including the Baltimore City State’s Attorney, cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

Small Business Effect: None. It is assumed that this bill would not directly affect small businesses.

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: At present, the District Court has neither evening hours of operation nor a “housing court”. The bill does not specify the caseload of the housing court. The District Court advises that this bill could result in the need for additional judgeships, since existing judges in Baltimore City would have to be reassigned from their current duties. In addition, an evening docket would require expenditures for clerks, bailiffs, programming changes for notices, cashiers, and building security.

Since the District Court has not provided an assessment of the changes required under this bill, it is difficult to reliably estimate the fiscal impact on the Judiciary. However, if this bill results in the need for additional judgeships and operating costs, State expenditures could be significantly affected. The annual salary and fringe benefits for each additional District

Court judge in fiscal 1998 is estimated at \$136,000. In addition, the District Court for Baltimore City does not have any vacant courtrooms. Therefore, if additional judgeships are needed, this bill would require the rental of additional office space and the conversion of that space into appropriate chambers for a housing court. The office space rental costs and the one-time courtroom conversion costs for fiscal 1998 are estimated at \$365,000.

While that rental need would exist in fiscal 1998 and 1999, the ongoing capital construction project of new facilities for the District Court in Baltimore City is scheduled for completion in May of 1999. Accordingly, if there is not a need for expansion of that District Court outside of the expansion that may be required under this bill, the housing court could move into those new facilities at or near the beginning of fiscal 2000.

Any other potential costs or savings to the State, including the Public Defender, cannot be reliably estimated at this time since it is unknown how the District Court in Baltimore City might be reorganized as a result of this bill.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (District Court); Department of Fiscal Services

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Analysis by: Guy G. Cherry

Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 841-3710

(301) 858-3710