

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1086 (Delegate Slade. *et al.*)

Appropriations

Circuit Courts - Efficiency and Equity

This bill requires the State to fund standing masters and interpreters for the circuit courts and to pay jurors expense money of \$10 per day. The bill does not require a current position of standing master to be converted to a State standing master, and does not alter any existing pension rights. Counties may elect to pay additional per diem amounts to jurors.

The compensation of State standing masters shall be included in the State budget for the Judiciary beginning in fiscal 2001. Otherwise, the bill is effective October 1, 1998.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Increase in general fund expenditures of \$2.0 million in FY 1999; out-years reflect annualization and State funding of masters' compensation beginning in FY 2001. No effect on revenues.

(in millions)	FY 1999	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003
GF Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditures	\$2.0	\$2.6	\$5.5	\$5.5	\$5.6
Net Effect	(\$2.0)	(\$2.6)	(\$5.5)	(\$5.5)	(\$5.6)

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

Local Effect: Collective decrease in annual expenditures comparable to the amount of increase in State general fund expenditures. No effect on revenues.

Small Business Effect: None.

Fiscal Analysis

State Expenditures: This fiscal note assumes that the State will assume funding for all currently existing circuit court masters, beginning in fiscal 2001. There are currently 29 full-time, locally funded masters in the State. It is estimated that the cost to the State for assumption of the payment of the salaries and fringe benefits for these employees would total approximately \$2,849,276 in fiscal 2001. This estimate assumes a salary for each master of \$80,000 in fiscal 2001. Future year expenditures reflect full salaries with 3.5% annual increases and 3% employee turnover. To the extent that the number of masters to be funded by the State is less than 29, general fund expenditures would be lower. Although this estimate assumes that all of the State standing masters would participate in the State Employees' Pension System, masters appointed prior to 1989 are participants in the judges' pension system, which involves greater expense for the State.

The juror expense money to be paid by the State is estimated at \$1,800,102 for fiscal 1999, which reflects the bill's effective date. This amount is roughly equivalent to 2/3 of the total juror expense money paid annually by the circuit courts (adjusted for 3/4 of a fiscal year), because many jurisdictions pay jurors a per diem of \$15.

The cost for interpreters to be assumed by the State is estimated at \$162,000 for fiscal 1999, which reflects the bill's effective date. This amount is roughly equivalent to the total cost for interpreters paid by the circuit courts annually (adjusted for 3/4 of a fiscal year).

Local Expenditures: Under the assumptions used in this fiscal note, collective expenditures by the circuit courts would decrease by approximately the same amount annually as the increase in State expenditures. However, the decrease in compensation expense for masters may not equal the increase to be paid by the State, because different counties pay their masters different salaries. To the extent that counties elect to continue funding their own masters, county expenditures would not decrease. County expenditures could increase to the extent that counties are required to provide additional space, equipment, supplies, or staffing for any new master over and above that which is already provided.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Caroline, Howard, and Prince George’s counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 24, 1998
Inc

Analysis by: Claire E. Rooney
Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 841-3710
(301) 858-3710