

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 1999 Session

FISCAL NOTE

Senate Bill 14 (Senators Stone and Bromwell)

Judicial Proceedings

Courts - District Court Facilities in Baltimore County

This bill requires the District Court to continue to maintain a court facility in the Dundalk area. Under current law this requirement will sunset on June 30, 1999.

The bill takes effect June 1, 1999.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures would increase by approximately \$492,900 in FY 2000, which includes one-time expenses to renovate a new District Court site in the Dundalk area. Out-year expenditures reflect inflation and employee turnover. Revenues would not be affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
GF Revenues	-	-	-	-	-
GF Expenditures	\$492,900	\$303,000	\$307,100	\$311,400	\$315,700
Net Effect	(\$492,900)	(\$303,000)	(\$307,100)	(\$311,400)	(\$315,700)

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

Local Effect: Minimal incidental expenditures by local governments, particularly Baltimore County, would continue indefinitely. Revenues would not be affected.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Fiscal Analysis

State Effect: If the Dundalk facility is closed, the judge and all courthouse staff except the principal supervisor will be relocated among the other Baltimore County District Court locations in Catonsville, Essex, and Towson. The District Court has been preparing for the July 1999 transfer of employees and cases from Dundalk and has increased parking and clerical space at the other facilities.

The District Court advises that its lease for the Dundalk facility expires in July 1999. It is understood that the landlord of this facility does not wish to renew the lease. Even if the District Court were successful in renewing the lease, however, renovations would need to be made and a new rental rate negotiated. An elevator would need to be installed and bathroom and courtroom renovations would need to be made to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, at a minimum estimated cost of \$500,000.

More likely, the District Court and Department of General Services would be required to renovate a new site. The District Court advises that such a process would take 12 to 15 months before the court could open. (During this time, the Dundalk facility's workload would be handled at other District Court sites). Courtrooms and holding cells would have to be built, and data and telecommunications wiring installed. Estimated annual rent costs for 15,385 square feet at \$16 per square foot would be \$246,160. One-time fit-up expenses are estimated at \$180,000. Continuation of the principal supervisor position would cost \$40,050 in fiscal 2000 for salary and fringe benefits. Other costs would include telecommunications, utilities, supplies, and building maintenance. The total cost of maintaining a District Court facility in Dundalk is estimated to be approximately \$492,930 in fiscal 2000. Future year expenditures reflect: (1) full salary with 3.5% annual increases and 3% employee turnover; and (2) 2% annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

	<u>FY 2000</u>	<u>FY 2001</u>
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$40,050	\$41,524
Telecommunications	4,500	4,545
Utilities	4,600	4,646
Building Maintenance	3,500	3,535
Rent	246,160	248,622
Fit-up Costs	194,000	--
Supplies	<u>120</u>	<u>121</u>
Total	\$492,930	\$302,993

No funding for maintaining the District Court facility in Dundalk is included in the Governor's proposed fiscal 2000 budget.

The District Court believes that it has the ability to function more efficiently without the Dundalk facility. When multiple courtrooms exist at 1 site, cases can be transferred from courtroom to courtroom as some judges conclude their dockets early and other judges are backlogged. This cannot be done at the Dundalk site because it houses only 1 judge. As a result, people involved in legal matters at the Dundalk facility are required to wait longer periods of time than they would if the court facilities were consolidated.

Closing the Dundalk facility would result in increased efficiency and convenience for the State due to reduced travel and waiting by State government personnel (public defenders, probation agents, law enforcement officers, etc.) who would no longer be required to visit the Dundalk facility.

Local Effect: Maintaining the Dundalk facility would result in continued minimal incidental expenditures for local governments, particularly Baltimore County, due to the travel and waiting done by local government personnel (State's attorneys, county attorneys, law enforcement officers, etc.) who are required to visit the Dundalk facility.

Small Business Effect: Any small businesses that depend upon the operation of the Dundalk facility as a source of revenues would be favorably impacted by this bill. The number of businesses that are dependent on the Dundalk facility and the extent of their dependence are unknown. Possible examples of dependent small businesses are nearby law firms and restaurants.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (District Court of Maryland), Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 15, 1999

ncs\jr

Analysis by: Claire E. Rooney

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 946-5510

(301) 970-5510