

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 812
Judiciary

(Delegate Lee, *et al.*)

Criminal Law - Stalking - Included Acts

This bill defines the term “conduct” as applicable to the crime of stalking. It is defined as including: (1) approaching or pursuing another; (2) monitoring or following another by or through the use of any device, action, or means, including electronic methods; or (3) communicating with another through verbal, written, electronic, or other means.

The bill also alters the definition of the term “stalking” by eliminating “approaching or pursuing another” from the elements of the term.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential minimal increase in general fund revenues and expenditures due to the bill’s expanded definition of the crime of stalking and the applicable penalty provisions.

Local Effect: Potential minimal increase in local revenues and expenditures due to the bill’s expanded definition of the crime of stalking and the applicable penalty provisions.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 313 of 2003 expanded the elements of the crime of stalking beyond requiring the intent of placing a victim in fear to include reasonable knowledge that one’s actions would place the victim in fear. As a result, stalking is defined as a malicious course of conduct that includes approaching or pursuing another where the person intends to place or knows or reasonably should have known the conduct would

place another in reasonable fear of serious bodily injury, assault, rape or sexual offense (including attempted acts), false imprisonment, or death, or that a third person likely will suffer any of these acts. Conduct performed to ensure compliance with a court order or carry out a lawful commercial purpose, or otherwise authorized by local, State, or federal law, is exempted. Violators are guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to maximum penalties of five years imprisonment and/or a \$5,000 fine.

State Revenues: General fund revenues could increase minimally as a result of the applicable monetary penalty provision from cases heard in the District Court.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures could increase minimally as a result of the applicable incarceration penalty due to more people being committed to Division of Correction (DOC) facilities and increased payments to counties for reimbursement of inmate costs. The number of people convicted of this proposed crime is expected to be minimal.

Persons serving a sentence longer than 18 months are incarcerated in DOC facilities. Currently, the average total cost per inmate, including overhead, is estimated at \$1,850 per month. This bill alone, however, should not create the need for additional beds, personnel, or facilities. Excluding overhead, the average cost of housing a new DOC inmate (including medical care and variable costs) is \$310 per month. Excluding medical care, the average variable costs total \$120 per month.

Persons serving a sentence of one year or less in a jurisdiction other than Baltimore City are sentenced to local detention facilities. For persons sentenced to a term of between 12 and 18 months, the sentencing judge has the discretion to order that the sentence be served at a local facility or DOC. The State reimburses counties for part of their incarceration costs, on a per diem basis, after a person has served 90 days. State per diem reimbursements for fiscal 2006 are estimated to range from \$17 to \$65 per inmate depending upon the jurisdiction. Persons sentenced to such a term in Baltimore City are generally incarcerated in DOC facilities. The Baltimore City Detention Center, a State-operated facility, is used primarily for pretrial detentions.

Local Revenues: Revenues could increase minimally as a result of the applicable monetary penalty provision from cases heard in the circuit courts.

Local Expenditures: Expenditures could increase minimally as a result of the applicable incarceration penalty. Counties pay the full cost of incarceration for people in their facilities for the first 90 days of the sentence, plus part of the per diem cost after 90 days. Per diem operating costs of local detention facilities are expected to range from \$33 to \$119 per inmate in fiscal 2006.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: A similar bill, HB 623 of 2004, received an unfavorable report from the Judiciary Committee.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts), Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Department of Legislative Services

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mp/jr

Analysis by: Guy G. Cherry

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510