

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 620 (Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee)(By Request - Maryland Judicial Conference)

Judicial Proceedings

St. Mary's County - Judgeships - Circuit Courts

This bill alters the number of resident judges of the circuit court by adding one additional judgeship in St. Mary’s County.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$358,300 in FY 2026 for one additional judge and associated staff; the FY 2026 budget as introduced includes funding for this purpose. Future year expenditures reflect annualization. Revenues are not affected.

| (in dollars) | FY 2026 | FY 2027 | FY 2028 | FY 2029 | FY 2030 |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Revenues | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| GF Expenditure | 358,300 | 472,000 | 479,000 | 486,400 | 493,900 |
| Net Effect | (\$358,300) | (\$472,000) | (\$479,000) | (\$486,400) | (\$493,900) |

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

Local Effect: St. Mary’s County expenditures increase by approximately \$400,000 in FY 2026 and by approximately \$500,000 annually thereafter for staff and ongoing operating costs. One-time expenses for courthouse renovations are also incurred in FY 2026. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: There are 176 circuit court judges in the State, including 3 in St. Mary's County.

To support the General Assembly's role in establishing new judgeships, the Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of Maryland annually certifies to the General Assembly the need for additional judges in the State. The Judiciary uses best practices developed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to calculate judicial need, which take into account the amount of judicial work generated on average per case filing within each distinct case type. Using the model developed by NCSC, judicial need for fiscal 2026 was primarily based on new case filings mostly unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic (fiscal 2019, 2023, and 2024). Although certification of judicial workloads indicates a projected need of four additional judges throughout the State (one in circuit courts (including the judgeship added by the bill), three in the District Court), the Judiciary is requesting one judge position for St. Mary's County. An additional judgeship was last created by Chapters 756 and 757 of 2024, which added one circuit court judge in Prince George's County.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by \$358,285 in fiscal 2026, which reflects the bill's October 1, 2025 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of creating one circuit court judgeship in St. Mary's County and the associated positions of one courtroom clerk and one law clerk with the judgeship (a total of three positions). It includes salaries and fringe benefits; the fiscal 2026 budget as introduced includes funding for these positions.

Future year expenditures generally reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover. However, pursuant to Joint Resolutions 2 and 3 of 2022, judicial salaries have been set in statute through fiscal 2026. Because future increases in judicial salaries depend on any recommendations proposed by the Judicial Compensation Commission and subsequent action by the General Assembly, judicial salaries beyond fiscal 2026 do not account for additional increases.

Local Expenditures: St. Mary's County expenditures increase by approximately \$400,000 in fiscal 2026 for costs associated with hiring one administrative assistant, three contract deputies (court security officers), and one bailiff to support the additional circuit court judgeship; expenditures increase by approximately \$500,000 annually thereafter. The estimate generally includes salaries, fringe benefits, and operating expenses; however, St. Mary's County also advises that one-time expenses are incurred to renovate the courthouse to accommodate an additional courtroom. An estimate of these costs was not provided.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 864 (Chair, Judiciary Committee, *et al.*) (By Request - Maryland Judicial Conference) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): St. Mary's County; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 9, 2025
km/jkb

Analysis by: Joanne E. Tetlow

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