

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 361
Judiciary

(Delegate Arentz, *et al.*)

Queen Anne's County – Circuit Court Judgeships

This bill alters the number of resident judges of the circuit court by adding one additional judgeship in Queen Anne's County. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by at least \$370,700 in FY 2027 for one additional judge and associated staff; future year expenditures reflect annualization. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	370,700	487,900	496,300	505,100	513,700
Net Effect	(\$370,700)	(\$487,900)	(\$496,300)	(\$505,100)	(\$513,700)

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

Local Effect: Queen Anne's County expenditures increase by approximately \$700,000 in FY 2027 and by a minimum of \$600,000 annually thereafter for staff and ongoing operating costs. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: There are 176 circuit court judges in the State, including 1 in Queen Anne's County.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures increase by *at least* \$370,670 in fiscal 2027, which reflects a 90-day start-up delay from the bill's July 1, 2026 effective date. This estimate reflects the cost of creating one circuit court judgeship in Queen Anne'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.

Positions	3.0
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$370,670
Operating Expenses*	<u>0</u>
Total FY 2027 State Expenditures	\$370,670

(* Because counties are generally responsible for funding certain operating expenses of the circuit courts, expenditures for operating expenses are reflected in the fiscal estimate for Queen Anne's County below)

Future year expenditures generally reflect full salaries with annual increases and employee turnover. The Department of Legislative Services notes, however, that this estimate only reflects the current salary (fiscal 2026 – \$214,433) for a circuit court judge. Pursuant to statute, future increases in judicial salaries depend on any recommendations proposed by the Judicial Compensation Commission and subsequent action by the General Assembly. Legislation (Senate Joint Resolution 2 and House Joint Resolution 6 of 2026) proposing increases in judicial salaries from fiscal 2027 through 2030 has been introduced this session. General fund expenditures therefore may increase beyond what is estimated in this fiscal and policy note to the extent that judicial salaries are increased.

Local Expenditures: Queen Anne's County anticipates expenditures of approximately \$700,000 in fiscal 2027 for costs associated with operating expenses (including a one-time equipment cost of \$255,000) and hiring five full-time and two part-time staff to support the new circuit court judgeship; expenditures increase by at least \$600,000 annually thereafter.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 877 and HB 975 of 2025.

Designated Cross File: SB 358 (Senator Hershey) - Judicial Proceedings.

Information Source(s): Queen Anne's County; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 30, 2026
sj/jkb

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