

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 608

(The Speaker)(By Request - Judicial Compensation
Commission)

Appropriations

Courts - Administrative Judges - Annual Stipend

This bill authorizes the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court of Maryland and a judge who serves as an administrative judge for a circuit court or the District Court to receive an annual stipend in addition to the judge's annual salary. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures for the Judiciary increase to the extent judges serving in administrative roles receive an annual stipend; the FY 2027 budget as introduced includes sufficient funding to provide a stipend, consistent with recommendations of the Judicial Compensation Commission, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: The bill does not affect local government operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background:

Judicial Compensation Commission

The Judicial Compensation Commission is required to review judicial salaries and make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly once every four years with respect to all aspects of judicial compensation. The judicial compensation structure is

intended to be adequate to assure that highly qualified persons will be attracted to the bench and will continue to serve there without unreasonable economic hardship.

The General Assembly may amend a joint resolution from the commission to decrease, but not increase, any of the commission's salary recommendations. Failure to adopt or amend the joint resolution within 50 calendar days of its introduction results in adoption of the salaries recommended by the commission.

Based on recommendations from the Judicial Compensation Commission, 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. In addition to proposed salary increases for all judges, the resolution also recommends an annual stipend of \$7,500 for the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court of Maryland and for any judge who serves as an administrative judge for a circuit court or District Court.

The Judiciary advises that authorizing an annual stipend – in addition to recognizing the additional responsibilities these judges perform beyond the regular duties of a judge – may assist recruitment and retention of judges in these leadership positions of court administration.

Maryland Rules – Court Administration

The duties and responsibilities of the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court and the administrative judges of the circuit court and District Court are specified in the Maryland Rules.

Chief Judge of the Appellate Court: Generally, Maryland Rule 16-103 specifies that, at the direction of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland, the Chief Judge of the Appellate Court is responsible for the administration of the Appellate Court, and generally has the authority of a county administrative judge.

Administrative Judge of a Circuit Court: Administrative judges for each circuit court (specified as "county administrative judges" in Maryland Rule 16-105) are designated by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (and serve at the Chief Justice's pleasure), after consideration of the recommendation of the Circuit Administrative Judge. Generally, the county administrative judge must be a judge of that circuit court, and is responsible for the administration of the circuit court. This includes numerous duties such as supervision of the judges, officials, and employees of the court; assignment of judges within the court, as specified; preparation of the court's budget; and plans related to case management, continuity of operations, and the jury plan.

Administrative Judge of the District Court: The District Court operates in 12 districts across the State. Subject to the approval of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Chief Judge of the District Court must designate a District Court judge in each district as the administrative judge for that district. Subject to the direction of the Chief Judge of the District Court, the administrative judges are generally responsible for, among other things, the administration, operation, and maintenance of the court and the conduct and scheduling of the court's business.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures for the Judiciary increase, potentially beginning as early as fiscal 2027, to the extent stipends are provided to judges serving in an administrative role. *For illustrative purposes only*, if the proposed recommendation of the Judicial Compensation Commission to provide an annual \$7,500 stipend is ultimately implemented by the General Assembly, general fund expenditures increase by approximately \$277,500 annually from fiscal 2027 through 2030.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: SB 313 (The President)(By Request - Judicial Compensation Commission) - Budget and Taxation.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 9, 2026
sj/jkb

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