



Supreme Court of Maryland

Robert C. Murphy Courts of Appeal Building
361 Rowe Boulevard
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice

(410) 260-3725

MARYLAND JUDICIARY

FISCAL YEAR 2026 OPERATING BUDGET

RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES ANALYSIS

C00A00

SENATE BUDGET & TAXATION COMMITTEE
SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY, TRANSPORTATION, & ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
SENATOR MICHAEL A. JACKSON, CHAIR
FEBRUARY 20, 2025

JUDICIAL BUDGET REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

The Maryland Judiciary, with the assistance of the National Center for State Courts, developed the 2024-2029 Maryland Judiciary Strategic Campaign. The process engaged members of the Maryland Judiciary, its justice partners, and the public to identify initiatives aligned with the Judiciary's mission of providing fair, efficient, and effective justice for all. The strategic vision is forward-looking, innovative and responsive, collaborative and partner based, court and court user-centered, and future workforce focused.

Approved by the Judicial Council in 2024, the strategic initiatives reflect the Judiciary's focus on key initiatives:

- Promote Accountability and Public Trust
- Improve Access to Justice
- Foster a Healthy, Diverse, and Productive Workforce
- Encourage a Service-Oriented Approach to Court Operations
- Use Technology Effectively and Responsibly

Core value statements were set forth to emphasize the fundamental principles that guide the Judiciary, including the rule of law, judicial impartiality, and independence. They uphold the commitment to equal justice through fairness and impartial treatment of all individuals, ensuring dignity, respect, and inclusivity. Excellence is achieved by adhering to the highest standards of performance, ethics, accountability, and service. A dedication to service is reflected in the delivery of

high-quality, timely assistance to all who engage with the court system. Additionally, a collaborative approach fosters strong partnerships with stakeholders to advance the Judiciary's mission.

The Judiciary's Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Submission is \$722.0 million in general funds and \$813.4 million in total funds. The Judiciary represents 1.2% of the overall Fiscal Year 2025 State appropriation.

The major components of the budget are: salaries and benefits at 66%, contractual services at 13%, aid/grants to courts at 11%, and fixed costs at 3%. The general fund submission of \$722 million represents a 4.7% increase at \$32.4 million over the Fiscal Year 2025 working appropriation. The submission includes funding for personnel-related items, such as employee merit increments, a limited number of new positions, including a judgeship and direct service positions, legislatively approved salary increases for judges, and pensions. The submission also includes funding for priority physical security initiatives and operational increases.

The Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

Add the following language to the general fund appropriation:

Provided that this appropriation shall be reduced by \$687,742 in general funds and 5 new positions shall be abolished. The Chief Justice is authorized to allocate this reduction across the Judiciary.

Explanation: This action will abolish 5 new positions in the Judiciary's fiscal 2026 allowance in the following programs: Circuit Court Judges (2); District Court (2); and Clerks of the Circuit Court (1). These positions are being abolished due to a lack of demonstrated need for the new positions.

Judiciary Response:

The Judiciary accepts the abolishment of two District Court case manager positions, in acknowledgement of the State's fiscal constraints projected for Fiscal Year 2026, but respectfully disagrees with the abolishment of three positions related to a new judgeship in St. Mary's County.

The Maryland Judiciary appreciates the Committee's consideration of all requests for new judgeships. The Judiciary uses a standard methodology to determine what locations have a certified need for a judgeship. The underlying model for establishing judicial officer need that is currently in use was developed by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC). This model was last fully updated in 2017, with a subsequent partial update in 2022, *State of Maryland Limited Scope Workload Adjustment for District and Circuit Court Judicial Officers*. As recommended by the NCSC, this model relies predominately on new case filings in the three most recent fiscal years unaffected by the pandemic; Fiscal Years 2019, 2023, and 2024. As reflected in the Judiciary's submission this year, the model identified a certified need for four additional judgeships. Due to

reasons including space limitations and fiscal considerations, the Judiciary is not requesting any of those new judgeships.

While the model relies on case weights, the NCSC recognizes that other qualitative factors can be considered as well, including local court practices and variations in policies among the State's Attorneys. Four circuit court jurisdictions in which the model did not identify a certified need requested additional judgeships. One of those is St. Mary's County. The Judiciary requested a new judgeship in St. Mary's County based on factors relevant to workload in that jurisdiction that are not accounted for in the model.

The Judiciary has not requested a new judgeship in the three other counties. Although each has made a good case for needing additional resources, the Judiciary has not identified sufficient factors relevant to workload in those jurisdictions. As a result, consistent with past practice and representations to the General Assembly, the Judiciary is not requesting additional judgeships in those jurisdictions and did not include additional PINs or funding for those counties in its budget submission.

Although many of our jurisdictions are only now returning to the same caseload numbers that preceded the pandemic, St. Mary's has increased caseloads. Perhaps most significantly, owing to policies of the State's Attorney in St. Mary's County, its contested criminal jury trials held have increased 261% between CY2019 and CY2024. That is particularly significant because the model we employ to analyze the need for judgeships is based on filings and does not take into account jurisdiction-specific changes in what happens to cases after filing. A case that goes to a jury trial takes far more time than a similar case that is resolved by a plea agreement. The model does not account for that increase.

St. Mary's County has seen a 62% increase over that same period in family law merits hearings, which similarly is not accounted for in the methodology. In spite of efforts to address the backlog, those and other changes have not allowed that court to do so.

The "Rounded Judge Need" cited in the certification analysis only reflects the quantitative factors of the model, which is based on filing trends. It does not consider the qualitative factors including an increase in criminal trials and family law hearings that have occurred in St. Mary's County. These qualitative factors are the reason why the Judiciary requested one additional judgeship in St. Mary's County.

The Judiciary recognizes limitations of the current model and is currently developing a Request for Proposal to engage a vendor to update the model to incorporate changes in legislation, court practices, and filing trends that have occurred since the last full-model update in 2017. It is expected that the results of the full model update will be available and incorporated into the Fiscal Year 2028 Analysis of Need for Additional Judgeships in the Judicial Branch report.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Add the following language to the general fund appropriation:

Further provided that this appropriation shall be reduced by \$393,939 in general funds to increase turnover expectancy among new positions. The Chief Justice is authorized to allocate this reduction across the Judiciary.

Explanation: This reduction is made in order to increase the turnover rate for new positions within the Judiciary from 5.72% to 25.00%.

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary respectfully disagrees.

In its budget submission, the Judiciary did calculate the turnover rate for new positions at 25% and the turnover rate for existing positions at 5% for the budget submission. These calculations may not be evident in all data sets from the State budget system. The proposed reduction is already reflected in the Judiciary's submission.

RECOMMENDATION 3

	Amount Change
Reduce \$600,000 in general funds made for the purpose of duplicating equipment expenses to align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses.	-\$600,000 GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation, in acknowledgement of the State's fiscal constraints projected for Fiscal Year 2026. The Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Add the following language to the general fund appropriation:

, provided that \$8,600,000 of this appropriation made for the purpose of providing attorneys for required representation at initial appearances before District Court commissioners consistent with the holding of the Supreme Court of Maryland in DeWolfe v. Richmond may be expended only for that purpose. Funds not expended for this restricted purpose may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any other purpose and shall revert back to the General Fund.

Explanation: This language restricts the use of \$8.6 million of the Judiciary's general fund appropriation for the implementation of DeWolfe v. Richmond to that purpose only.

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Add the following language to the general fund appropriation:

Further provided that \$250,000 of this appropriation made for the purpose of operating the Appointed Attorney Program may not be expended until the Judiciary submits a report to the budget committees on the costs and utilization of the Appointed Attorney Program, including the results of initial appearances before District Court commissioners when attorneys were appointed to represent indigent defendants as part of the Appointed Attorney Program and the total number of defendants provided with representation by the program. The report shall be submitted by December 15, 2025, and the budget committees shall have 45 days from the date of the receipt of the report to review and comment. Funds restricted pending the receipt of a report may not be transferred by budget amendment or otherwise to any other purpose and shall revert to the General Fund if the report is not submitted to the budget committees.

Explanation: This language restricts funds pending the submission of the annual report on the costs and utilization of the Appointed Attorney Program.

Information Request	Author	Due Date
----------------------------	---------------	-----------------

Appointed Attorney Program costs and utilization	Judiciary	December 15, 2025
--	-----------	-------------------

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary agrees in part, but respectfully disagrees with other aspects of the recommendation.

The District Court previously submitted a report to DLS identifying the costs and utilization for the appointed attorney program. However, it did not submit a report that includes the results of each initial appearance before the District Court commissioners for several reasons.

First, the appointed attorney program is required to fulfill a constitutional right ensuring that each indigent defendant has the opportunity for counsel at the initial appearance. This right must be fulfilled and the decision of the commissioner is irrelevant to the satisfaction of this right.

Second, the initial appearance outcome data requested will not help guide decisions as to the efficiency or effectiveness of the program. The facts of each case are unique, and the decisions made by the commissioners at the initial appearance involve many factors. The nature of the current charges, the prior criminal record, the number of times the defendant has failed to appear, employment history, safety of the victim and the argument of the appointed attorney are just some of the factors that are considered in making a decision at the initial appearance. In addition, there are statutory requirements when a defendant is charged with certain crimes (i.e., charges that hold a maximum penalty of life in prison, or certain firearm charges when previously convicted of a crime of violence or firearm charges, or the defendant is a registered sex offender (CP 5-202 a-g)) that

remove a commissioner's discretion from releasing the individual. Accordingly, regardless of any argument made by an appointed attorney, in certain cases the commissioners do not have the legal authority to release the defendant and must hold the defendant. Despite the lack of discretion, the defendant still has a right to be represented by an attorney at the initial hearing. Maryland Rule 4-216.1(f) lists all of the factors considered by the commissioners.

Finally, the requested data would require the court to produce initial appearance outcome data on 30,787 cases. This is a very large data set, and the system is currently not configured for a report of this type. Custom programming will need to be developed and implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 6

	Amount Change
Reduce \$670,000 in general funds made for salary increases for contractual personnel to align with increases for State employees.	-\$670,000 GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation, in acknowledgement of the State's fiscal constraints projected for Fiscal Year 2026, provided that the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary. Part of this increase is attributable to the services of senior judges, whose salaries are tied to active judges. The Judiciary lacks discretion on granting these increases.

RECOMMENDATION 7

	Amount Change
Reduce \$1,000,000 in general funds made for the purpose of equipment repairs and maintenance expenses to align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses.	-\$1,000,000 GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation, in acknowledgement of the State's fiscal constraints projected for Fiscal Year 2026. The Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDATION 8

	Amount Change	
Increase contractual employee turnover expectancy to better align with fiscal 2025 levels.	-\$435,000	GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary respectfully disagrees.

Senior Judges do not have a turnover rate applied to their budgeted salaries due to the on-call nature of their work. They only work the hours that they are needed.

RECOMMENDATION 9

	Amount Change	
Reduce \$150,000 made for the purpose of providing attorneys for required representation at initial appearances before District Court Commissioners consistent with the holding of the Supreme Court of Maryland in DeWolfe v. Richmond to align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses.	-\$150,000	GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 10

	Amount Change	
Reduce \$175,000 in general funds made for the purpose of travel expenses to align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses.	-\$175,000	GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation, in acknowledgement of the State's fiscal constraints projected for Fiscal Year 2026. The Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDATION 11

Adopt the following narrative:

Annual Court Performance Measures: The committees request a report on the performance of the circuit and District courts, to be submitted by December 15, 2025, with annual court performance measures data for the circuit and District courts.

Information Request	Author	Due Date
Annual court performance measures report	Judiciary	December 15, 2025

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 12

Adopt the following narrative:

Problem-Solving Court (PSC) Performance and Funding: The committees request a report on the work of the Judiciary's PSCs, to be submitted by December 15, 2025. The report should show the funding allocated and performance data for all PSC types in fiscal 2025, including the average length of time a defendant's case is active in each type of court, the reasons defendants fail to successfully complete a program, and the average cost per defendant in each type of PSC. The report should also include the anticipated costs by PSC type and location for fiscal 2026 and fiscal 2027.

Information Request	Author	Due Date
PSC funding and performance report	Judiciary	December 15, 2025

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 13

Adopt the following narrative:

Judgeship Need for Fiscal 2027: The committees request a report on judgeship needs at the Judiciary, to be submitted by December 15, 2025. The report should include a detailed analysis of the Judiciary's fiscal 2027 judgeship needs.

Information Request	Author	Due Date
Judgeship needs for fiscal 2027	Judiciary	December 15, 2025

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 14

	Amount Change	
Reduce \$500,000 in general funds made for the purpose of communications expenses to align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses.	-\$500,000	GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation, in acknowledgement of the State's fiscal constraints projected for Fiscal Year 2026. The Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDATION 15

	Amount Change	
Reduce \$900,000 in general funds made for the purpose of printing expenses to align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses.	-\$900,000	GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation, in acknowledgement of the State's fiscal constraints projected for Fiscal Year 2026. The Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDATION 16

	Amount Change	
Reduce \$1,200,000 in general funds made for the purpose of software license expenses to decrease the funding available for additional software licenses.	-\$1,200,000	GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary respectfully disagrees with the Department's recommendation.

The proposed reduction will affect the Judiciary's ability to renew software licenses for financial reporting, performance testing, and quality assurance. It will also freeze the growth of licenses responsive to business needs such as courtroom video conferencing and end user support services, which could affect the Judiciary's ability to provide efficient and effective services to court users.

If any reduction is made, the Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDATION 17

	Amount Change	
Reduce \$1,250,000 in general funds made for the purpose of contracted information technology services to align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses.	-\$1,250,000	GF

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary respectfully disagrees with the Department's recommendation.

The proposed reduction to contracted information technology services will affect the Judiciary's ability to provide timely data infrastructure cabling statewide, which would result in the inability to maintain equipment replacement schedules for court users.

If any reduction is made, the Judiciary respectfully requests that, as in years past, the Chief Justice be authorized to allocate any reductions across the Judiciary.

RECOMMENDATION 18

Adopt the following narrative:

Major Information Technology Development Project (MITDP) Status Report: The committees request a report on the Judiciary's MITDPs to be submitted by December 15, 2025. The report should include actual costs for all projects in fiscal 2025 and anticipated costs for all projects through fiscal 2029, along with status updates for all projects.

Information Request	Author	Due Date
MITDP status report	Judiciary	December 15, 2025

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 19

Adopt the following narrative:

Land Records Improvement Fund (LRIF) Balance Report: The committees request a report on the status of the LRIF to be submitted by December 15, 2025. The report should include the fiscal 2025 revenues and expenditures for the fund along with forecasted revenues and expenditures for fiscal 2026 through 2029. The report should also include a breakdown of the expenditures for circuit court offices.

Information Request	Author	Due Date
LRIF balance report	Judiciary	December 15, 2025

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 20

Adopt the following narrative:

Private Home Detention Monitoring Reports: The committees request quarterly reports providing data on private home detention monitoring funded by the Judiciary. Each report should provide, at a minimum, the following information:

- the number of defendants enrolled in private home detention monitoring;
- the number of defendants removed from the program due to noncompliance;
- the number of defendants removed from the program for specific other reasons;
- the total funds spent on private home detention monitoring in the prior quarter;
- the total funds remaining for private home detention monitoring; and
- anticipated costs for the remainder of the year.

In addition, the first report should include the Judiciary's guidelines for when invoices need to be submitted by private home detention monitoring providers.

Information Request	Author	Due Date
Private home detention monitoring quarterly reports	Judiciary	October 15, 2025
		January 15, 2026
		April 15, 2026
		July 15, 2026

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation to produce a report but disagrees with certain aspects. Specifically, the Judiciary tracks financial data from invoices received from third parties but does not track the reasons for defendants being removed from the program and is not able to provide this information in a report. Accordingly, if this narrative is adopted, the Judiciary respectfully requests that the second and third bullet points be removed.

BUDGET ISSUES

ISSUE 1 – Judiciary Continues Progress on Major IT Projects

In December 2024, the Judiciary submitted a report on its MITDPs as requested by the 2024 JCR. The report provides information on the status of the Judiciary's MITDPs in various stages of development from planning to nearing completion. Exhibit 11 provides information included in the report on planned spending by project through fiscal 2029. The total spending on MITDPs in fiscal 2026 is expected to be approximately \$19.6 million, a decrease from the \$19.7 million estimated in the forecast submitted in December 2023. The decrease is due to several projects concluding in fiscal 2025, including the Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) project and the Courthouse eReadiness project. However, the amount of the decrease is smaller due to several projects receiving increased funding in fiscal 2026, including the Enterprise Content/Records Management project, which receives \$651,000 more in fiscal 2026 than the prior year; the Mobile Information project, which is budgeted at \$1.5 million in fiscal 2026, or \$500,000 more than the prior year; and the Enterprise Financial/HR System and Digital Evidence projects, which each grow by \$1.0 million in fiscal 2026. The Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) Enterprise Deployment project is now planned to conclude in fiscal 2026. This project was previously forecasted to need funding through at least fiscal 2028. Additionally, the Judiciary is now forecasting that the State of Maryland Automated Record Tracking (SMART) system replacement project will conclude in fiscal 2028. The report indicated that four projects are due to be completed in fiscal 2025 and are not receiving additional funding in fiscal 2026. Among the projects concluding in fiscal 2025 are the VoIP deployment and enhancements to various case and information management systems. A description of all active MITDPs that the Judiciary is currently facilitating can be found in Appendix 4.

DLS recommends adopting committee narrative requesting a report on the Judiciary's MITDPs, including the actual costs for fiscal 2025 and anticipated costs of MITDPs through fiscal 2030.

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary accepts the Department's recommendation.

ISSUE 2 – Appointed Attorney Program Continues Providing Representation for Indigent Defendants

The Appointed Attorney Program was created by the General Assembly in 2014 to ensure compliance with the decision issued by the Supreme Court of Maryland in DeWolfe v. Richmond. The program supplies attorneys to represent indigent defendants at initial appearances before District Court commissioners. The attorneys are private attorneys who are compensated by the State at a rate of \$60 per hour. In each year since the program's inception, the budget committees have required the Judiciary to report on the cost of the program. Data from fiscal 2024 shows that the full appropriation of \$8.75 million was not used with \$266,994 remaining unspent. Exhibit 12 shows a breakdown of the spending by judicial district, including a comparison with the amounts that the Judiciary originally budgeted for each district.

As shown in Exhibit 13, the Appointed Attorney Program paid a total of 17,429 invoices in fiscal 2024, a decrease of 303 from fiscal 2023. Prior to the fiscal 2024 report, the Judiciary provided data with the number of cases where representation was provided under the Appointed Attorney Program. The fiscal 2024 report only provided data on the total number of invoices paid. The 2024 JCR also requested that the Judiciary's report on the Appointed Attorney Program include the results of appearances where representation was provided by attorneys as part of the Appointed Attorney Program. The 2024 report was the second year where this data was requested and not provided.

The Judiciary should comment on the number of defendants provided with representation under the program in fiscal 2024.

DLS recommends reducing the funding for the Appointed Attorney Program by \$150,000 to better align with fiscal 2024 actual expenses. Additionally, DLS recommends adding language restricting \$8.6 million in general funds to be used for the implementation of the Appointed Attorney Program in accordance with DeWolfe v. Richmond. DLS also recommends adding budget bill language restricting \$250,000 in general funds pending submission of a report on the costs and utilization of the Appointed Attorney Program, including the results of initial appearances and the total number of defendants provided with representation by the program.

Judiciary Response: The Judiciary partially accepts the recommendation and respectfully disagrees in part, as discussed above for Recommendation 5.

COMMENTS REQUESTED

COMMENT 1

The Judiciary should comment on if a specific reason has been identified for the increase in Juvenile Delinquency cases, and, given that three of the four case types where the average processing time has increased involved vulnerable children, what actions are being taken or could be taken to improve average case processing times in the circuit court for cases involving

children. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) recommends adoption of committee narrative requesting the submission of a report on court performance measures for fiscal 2025.

Judiciary Response:

Juvenile Delinquency Caseloads

The observations drawn regarding Juvenile Delinquency case volumes appears to be based on the report *Fiscal Year 2024 Statewide Caseload Assessment: Circuit Courts*. This report examines a sample of cases disposed during the fiscal year and is therefore not a measure of filings or of all case processing activity. Numbers may vary across years based on exclusion criteria (e.g., restricted cases, reopened cases) or removal reasons (e.g., missing case suspension event triggers).

Further, the reasons for changes in the number of court filings in Juvenile Delinquency cases is outside the scope of the Judiciary's knowledge.

CINA and TPR Cases

The Judiciary believes that the cause of increases in average case processing times in these case types is primarily attributable to external resource constraints, including those of attorneys and the Department of Social Services (DSS). The Judiciary will be initiating a task force in an effort to make progress on reducing average case processing times.

A lack of attorney availability and external capacity leads to scheduling challenges for Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) and Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) cases. A small number of public defenders and attorneys are available and qualified to practice law on CINA and TPR cases in Maryland. Attorneys representing children and families are also typically spread across multiple jurisdictions. Multiple courts note that this limited capacity directly leads to scheduling conflicts and postponements.

Similar constraints apply to courts' work with the Department of Social Services (DSS). Multiple jurisdictions note challenges with DSS social workers completing reports and scheduling dependency mediations in a timely manner. Two jurisdictions also note that their DSS attorneys have contracts with multiple counties, leading to issues with docket management.

Although resource constraints are primarily external, one large jurisdiction reported internal staffing challenges this year leading to delays on TPR cases. These have been resolved and should not affect case processing moving forward.

The Judiciary agrees with the request to submit a report on court performance measures for Fiscal Year 2025.

COMMENT 2

The Judiciary should comment on what measures can be taken to improve success rates in all types of PSCs. The Judiciary should also comment on how criteria for acceptance into PSCs can be revised to lower the rate of unsuccessful completions in all types of PSCs.

DLS recommends adopting committee narrative requesting a report on PSC funding and performance in fiscal 2025, as well as anticipated costs by PSC type for fiscal 2026 and 2027.

Judiciary Response:

All of Maryland's Adult Drug Courts and Veterans Treatment Courts follow Maryland Adult Drug Court Performance Measures

<https://www.mdcourts.gov/sites/default/files/import/opsd/dtc/pdfs/evaluationsreports/mandaduldrugperformance2017.pdflt>

and All Rise Best Practices Standards (<https://allrise.org/publications/standards/>) for identifying and admitting individuals. These best practices emphasize targeting high-risk/high-need individuals¹ for admission using a validated risk and need screening tool. This approach ensures that the most appropriate participants are accepted, maximizing the potential for success in these programs.²

To further strengthen this effort, in Fiscal Year 2022, the Office of Problem-Solving Courts implemented the statewide use of the Risk and Needs Triage (RANT) screening tool through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). This standardized tool is now used in all of Maryland's Adult Drug Courts and Veterans Treatment Courts to improve participant identification and enhance program outcomes.

Beginning in Fiscal Year 2022, Maryland's Adult Drug Courts have been assessed and monitored for adherence to national best practice standards through the Best Assessment tool (<https://allrise.org/trainings/best-assessment-tool/>). Regular reassessments have been conducted to ensure continued alignment with these standards, resulting in a significant statewide adherence increase from 76% in Fiscal Year 2022 to 89% as of the most recent evaluations. Adherence to these national standards is designed to increase program completion rates and reduce recidivism, directly addressing the concerns raised in this directive.

Maryland's Family Treatment Courts also completed a best practices adherence assessment in Fiscal Year 2024. These standards, similar to those for Adult Drug Courts, are designed to improve participant success rates and produce more favorable outcomes for families and children involved in the program.

For Mental Health Courts and Truancy Courts, the Judiciary, through its Office of Problem-Solving Courts, continues to collaborate with State and federal partners to develop and deliver targeted training programs and to pursue ongoing research initiatives. These efforts are aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of these specialized courts, improving participant outcomes, and addressing challenges that may lead to unsuccessful program completions.

Overall, the Judiciary's adherence to national best practices, the adoption of validated risk and need screening tools, and ongoing assessments and training are key measures in improving success rates across all PSCs. The Judiciary remains committed to continuous improvement to ensure the best

1 Andrews and Bonta, 2010 Lowenkamp Latessa and Holsinger, 2006 Marlowe, 2009; 2012b NADCP, 2015

2 "Research has shown that drug courts targeting High Risk, High Needs participants have produced improved outcomes in terms of cost savings and reduction in recidivism, compared to drug courts that target offenders with Low Risk" *Maryland Adult Drug Court Performance Measures*. Sept. 2017

possible outcomes for all participants.

The Judiciary agrees with the request to submit a report on PSC funding and performance in Fiscal Year 2025, as well as anticipated costs by PSC type for Fiscal Years 2025 and 2027.