



April 2, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wanika Fisher, Chair
Health, Human Services and Public Safety Committee (HHSPS)

THRU: Joseph R. Hamlin 
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis

FROM: Roger Banegas 
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Circuit Court
Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Review

Budget Overview

The FY 2025 Proposed Budget for the Circuit Court is approximately \$28.5 million. This is a decrease of \$1.2 million, or -4.1%, under the FY 2024 Approved Budget. The General Fund portion of the budget is approximately \$23.4 million, an increase of \$663,100, or 2.9% over the FY 2024 Approved Budget. The increase is primarily due to additional funding allocated for juror fees due to the growth in the number of trials and the implementation of the required juror pay rate increase from \$15 to \$30 per State law. The grant-funded portion of the Court's budget is approximately \$5 million and is proposed to decrease by \$1,880,400, or 27.2%, mainly due to the enhancement of existing programs/services and the elimination of existing programs/services.

Fund	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2024 Estimated	% Change - Est vs App	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
General Fund	\$ 19,877,197	\$ 22,784,100	\$ 22,912,500	0.6%	\$ 23,447,200	\$ 663,100	2.9%
Grants	3,799,253	6,908,000	6,935,000	0.4%	5,027,600	(1,880,400)	-27.2%
Total	\$ 23,676,450	\$ 29,692,100	\$ 29,847,500	0.5%	\$ 28,474,800	\$ (1,217,300)	-4.1%

Authorized Staffing - All Classifications

	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2025 Proposed	Change	% Change
General Fund	191	191	0	0.0%
Grants	50	53	3	6.0%
Total	241	244	3	1.2%

Budget Comparison - General Fund

Approved Fiscal Year 2024 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2025

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2024 Estimated	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Compensation	\$ 11,622,187	\$ 13,430,100	\$ 12,587,400	\$ 12,915,000	\$ (515,100)	-3.8%
Fringe Benefits	3,584,064	4,821,400	4,518,900	4,636,500	(184,900)	-3.8%
Operating Expenses	4,619,319	4,532,600	5,806,200	5,895,700	1,363,100	30.1%
Capital Outlay	51,627	-	-	-	-	
Total	\$ 19,877,197	\$ 22,784,100	\$ 22,912,500	\$ 23,447,200	\$ 663,100	2.9%

Authorized Staffing Count - General Fund

	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Full-Time	155	155	0	0.0%
Part-Time	36	36	0	0.0%
Total	191	191	0	0.0%

Staffing Changes and Compensation

- The FY 2025 Proposed Budget includes authorization for 155 full-time positions, and 36 part-time General Fund positions, which is unchanged compared to the FY 2024 Approved Budget.
- According to the Circuit Court, as of March 8, 2024, 130 of their 155 General Funded full-time positions are filled, and 36 of their 36 part-time positions are filled.
- The proposed FY 2025 budget includes 36 vacant positions of which 25 are full-time funded positions. Seven (7) of these full-time positions are unfunded. For Grant funded positions there are eleven (11) full-time positions that are funded.
- The Court reported that its current rate of attrition is 2.42% which has amounted to 29 employees leaving the Court. The key factors contributing to the current attrition levels are employee resignations, of which there have been 23 due to employees seeking flexible telework options, alternative work schedules, and increases in salary. There have also been 3 regular retirements.

Fringe Benefits

- The FY 2025 General Fund Proposed Budget for fringe benefits is \$4,636,500. This is a decrease of \$184,900, or -3.8%, below the FY 2024 Approved Budget due to changes in compensation.

- A five-year trend analysis of fringe benefit expenditures is included below.

Fringe Benefits Historical Trend					
	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimated	FY 2025 Proposed
Fringe Benefits Expenditures	\$ 4,023,125	\$ 3,745,377	\$ 3,584,064	\$ 4,518,900	\$ 4,636,500
Compensation Expenditures	\$12,186,101	\$11,528,868	\$11,622,187	\$12,587,400	\$12,915,000
As a % of Compensation	33.0%	32.5%	30.8%	35.9%	35.9%
Annual % Change	46.0%	-6.9%	-4.3%	26.1%	2.6%

Operating Expenses

- General Fund FY 2025 operating expenses are proposed at approximately \$5.9 million and are comprised of the following major items:
 - Office Automation \$2,139,600
 - Miscellaneous 1,917,700
 - Other Operating Equipment Repair/Maintenance 893,700
 - General & Administrative Contracts 251,800
 - General Office Supplies 164,500
 - Periodicals 142,400
 - Telephone 131,400
 - Printing 111,500
- Overall, FY 2025 General Fund proposed operating expenses are increasing by \$1,363,100, or 30.1%, over the FY 2024 Approved Budget level.
- The accompanying table compares the FY 2025 Proposed Budget operating expenditures with the FY 2024 Approved Budget operating expenditures. In six (6) of the categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget increases planned spending over the FY 2024 Approved Budget. In five (5) of the categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget decreases planned spending compared to the FY 2024 Approved Budget. In two (2) of the categories, the FY 2025 Proposed Budget level remains unchanged compared to the FY 2024 Approved Budget.

Operating Objects	FY 2024 Budget	FY 2025 Proposed	FY 2024 - FY 2025	
			\$ Change	% Change
Office Automation	\$ 2,032,000	\$ 2,139,600	\$ 107,600	5%
Miscellaneous (includes Jury Fees)	600,000	1,917,000	1,317,000	220%
Telephone	107,800	131,400	23,600	21.9%
Membership Fees	12,400	12,400	-	0.0%
Equipment Lease	43,000	-	(43,000)	-100.0%
General & Administrative Contracts	286,500	251,800	(34,700)	-12.1%
Periodicals	142,400	142,400	-	0.0%
Training	25,000	51,500	26,500	106.0%
Printing	60,000	111,500	51,500	85.8%
Office & Operating Equipment Non Capital	60,900	27,200	(33,700)	-55.3%
General Office Supplies	73,200	164,500	91,300	124.7%
Interagency Charge	82,700	25,000	(57,700)	-69.8%
Mileage Reimbursement	25,200	27,700	2,500	9.9%
Other Operating Equipment Repair/Maintenance	981,500	893,700	(87,800)	-9%
TOTAL	\$ 4,532,600	\$ 5,895,700	\$ 1,363,100	30.1%

- The most significant increases between the FY 2025 Proposed Budget and the FY 2024 Approved Budget are in the Office Automation category (\$107,600 increase), which is a result of the increase in OIT technology allocation charge, and Miscellaneous (\$1,317,000 increase), which is a result of increased jury duty fees.
- The most significant decreases between the FY 2025 Proposed Budget and the FY 2024 Approved Budget are in the Other Operating Equipment category (\$87,800 decrease), Interagency Charges (\$57,700 decrease), Equipment Lease (\$43,000 decrease), General & Administrative Contracts (\$34,700 decrease), and Office and Operating Equipment Non-Capital (\$33,700 decrease). These are all due to a decrease in anticipated expenses in those categories.

Potential Recoveries

- In FY 2025, the Circuit Court does not propose to recover from any source. However, the Court has the potential to recover funds from the Bond Forfeiture Fund. Some information pertaining to this fund is as follows:
 - The Bond Forfeiture Fund receives proceeds when a defendant fails to appear and his/her bond is forfeited, which results in the bondsman paying the full amount of the bond. When this occurs, the State of Maryland receives 5%, and Prince George's County receives 95%. These funds must sit in the fund for 10 years before the County can make a claim and utilize these funds.
 - The Court is reporting the current balance of this fund at approximately \$1.4 million, with a 10-year vested balance of approximately \$1.4 million eligible for use.

- Recovery from the Fund can support the Court's Law Library Division, which has proposed FY 2025 costs of \$564,600. The Court has not recovered funds from this fund in the past five years.

HIGHLIGHTS

Workload/Performance Trends

- The Prince George's County Circuit Court currently has 24 sitting judges, seven (7) Family Magistrates, and one (1) Foreclosure Magistrate. The Circuit Court has requested the appointment of one (1) additional judge from the Judiciary, and if approved there will be a total of 25 judges in FY 2025. Additionally, the Circuit Court continues to utilize visiting and retired judges to help meet staffing needs in FY 2024 and in FY 2025.
- The Court's caseload increased from 31,479 total cases in FY 2021 to 39,612 total cases in FY 2022, to 45,844 cases in FY 2023, and a decrease estimate of 45,054 cases in FY 2024. The Court projects the caseload to increase for FY 2025 to 47,498. *See the FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget book pg. 293 for a breakdown of the different types of cases that support the presented numbers.*
- The Court has devised a strategy to accelerate the resolution of cases backlogged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan demanded significant staff involvement to manage scheduling issues, dispatch notices, arrange spaces, and handle the rise in jurors summoned for jury duty. Concurrently, it aims to ensure that ongoing cases adhere to time standards.
- The Circuit Court established the Youth Gun Possession Program in FY 2023. This program provides academic monitoring and assistance to Prince George's County residents between the ages of 14-18 who have a First Time Gun Possession Offense, are non-violent offenders, and have no prior delinquencies. The program's current capacity is 20 participants. There are currently 14 participants and 9 graduates (29 participants to date). This program has one (1) Department of Juvenile Services Case Manager and one (1) Circuit Court Case Manager that is currently Pending Hiring. The client and case manager ratio for both is 25:1.
- The Circuit Court established the Direction Youth Diversion Program in FY 2022. This program provides individuals engaging in delinquent behaviors who are between the ages of 12-18 years old and are non-violent offenders, with academic monitoring and assistance. The program provides services that support sobriety and abstinence from illegal substances and mentoring/tutoring. The program's current capacity is 15 participants. There are currently three (3) participants, with 22 graduates to date. There have been 37 participants

served since FY 2022. This program has one (1) Case Manager that is Pending Hiring, with a client and case manager ratio of 25:1.

- The Circuit Court established a Veterans Court Program in FY 2016. This is a voluntary twelve-month comprehensive treatment program. The focus of this program is Veterans entering the judicial system with non-violent offenses, documented substance abuse dependencies, and mental health issues. The program's capacity is 50 participants. There are currently 15 participants, with 6 graduates in FY 2024 and 37 graduates to date. There have been 428 participants served to date. This program has one (1) Community Supervision Case Manager and one (1) Circuit Court Case Manager/Mentor Liaison Coordinator with a ratio of 25:1.
- The Truancy Reduction Court was established in FY 2009. This program targets students who are under age 16.5 and who were absent from school 20% of a quarter, semester, or school year at the time of referral. The program's capacity is 40 students. The program has 31 current participants and seven (7) graduates in FY 2024. 155 participants have graduated to date. This program has one (1) Case Manager, with a client-to-case manager ratio of 25:1.
- The Family Justice Center (FJC) has experienced an increase in clients served from FY 2023 to FY 2024. Between October 2023 and February 2024, the Center has served 1,789 clients to date. The Court provided a breakdown for FY 2023 and FY 2024 (October 2023 to February 2024), with 1,123 serviced in FY 2023 and 666 clients serviced, respectively, in FY 2024 thus far. Additional resources and services may be required to address community needs better.
- The Court's foreclosure process includes mediation services that defendants may request prior to the sale of their property. In CY 2021, the Court received 271 foreclosure filings with 67 requests for mediation. For CY 2022, the Court received 1,740 foreclosure filings but is unable to provide the updated number of requests for mediation due to their Maryland Electronics Court (MDEC) conversion. In CY 2023, the Court has received 2071 foreclosure filings with 110 requests for mediation. In CY 2024, as of March 19, 2024, the Court has received 562 foreclosure filings with 190 requests for mediation.

Information Technology

- The Court has the following IT initiatives ongoing in FY 2024 and continuing into FY 2025:

FY 2024

- Infrared Cameras in the West Gate.
- Security coverage of the West Gate fence area.
- Updated the access control readers on the first floor of the CAB building.
- Installation of the Axis 2N Force intercom unit at the Commissioner entrance.
- Installation of a video wall at the Sally Port (Security Cameras).
- Video Wall for Security Fire Control at the Commissioner's entrance.

- Upgraded to Epson’s projectors in the courtrooms.

FY 2025

- Upgrade the cameras in the cell areas of Bourne.
- New installation of a Lockdown & Emergency Response System.
- Installation of a Wedge Barrier on the Commissioner side of the street.
- Incorporating the AXIS 2N intercom units into the Security VMS system.
- Complete the upgrade of the Epson projectors in the courtrooms.

Facilities

- The “Courthouse Renovations and Security Upgrades” project provides funds for increased and enhanced security and updating infrastructure throughout the Courthouse complex. This project has a total CIP budget of \$62,289,000. The project has estimated total expenditures of \$45,859,000 as of the end of FY 2024 and \$3,418,000 in the Proposed 2025 CIP Budget.

Budget Comparison - Grants

Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2025

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2024 Estimated	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Compensation	\$ 2,344,858	\$ 3,937,560	\$ 4,472,300	\$ 3,577,500	\$ (360,060)	-9.1%
Fringe Benefits	703,516	953,304	1,009,800	835,900	(117,404)	-12.3%
Operating Expenses	1,145,679	2,504,436	1,731,100	1,010,800	(1,493,636)	-59.6%
Capital Outlay	-	-	-	-	-	
Total	\$ 4,194,053	\$ 7,395,300	\$ 7,213,200	\$ 5,424,200	\$ (1,971,100)	-26.7%

Authorized Staffing Count - Grants

	FY 2024 Approved	FY 2025 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Full-Time	48	51	3	6.3%
Part-Time	2	2	0	0.0%
Total	50	53	3	6.0%

Grant Programs

- The FY 2025 Proposed Budget for the Circuit Court’s grant programs is approximately \$5.4 million, which is a decrease of \$1,971,100, or 26.7%, under the FY 2024 Approved Budget. The decrease is due to three multi-year grants that will not be awarded in FY 2025.
- In FY 2025, grant funding is anticipated for 51 full-time and 2 part-time positions.

- Grant-funded compensation is decreasing by \$360,060, or 9.1%, under the FY 2024 Approved levels, and Fringe Benefits are decreasing by \$117,404, or 12.3%, below the FY 2024 Approved levels.
- Grant-funded operating expenses are decreasing by \$1,493,636, or 59.6%, below the FY 2024 Approved levels.
- The following chart illustrates grant funding proposed for FY 2025, the grant source, and any funding match the County is required to qualify for the grant:

Grant Name	Grant Source	FY 2025 Budgeted Grant	
		Amount (Outside County)	County Match
Cooperative Reimbursement Agreement	State	\$ 612,900	\$ 392,000
Maryland Administrative Courts - Security Good and Services	State	\$ 500,000	
Economic Justice Initiative	State	\$ 20,000	\$ 4,600
Family Division Legislative Initiative	State	\$ 2,391,400	\$ -
Family Justice Center's "Changing Lives, Restoring Hope" (VOCA)	Federal	\$ 611,500	
Engaging Men and Boys as Allies	Federal	\$ 153,300	\$ -
Office of Problem Solving Courts (OPSC)	State	\$ 564,600	\$ -
Maryland Mediation Conflict and Resolution Office (MACRO)	State	\$ 81,000	\$ -
Enhancing Survivors Access to Justice and Supportive Services		\$ 92,000	\$ -
Total		\$ 5,026,700	\$ 396,600

- The Cooperative Reimbursement Agreement (CRA) supports the Circuit Court's child support enforcement programs.
- The Economic Justice Initiative (VAWA) supports the Circuit Court's child support enforcement programs. This initiative is aimed at survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking supporting them through an economic empowerment program.
- The Family Division Legislative Initiative Grant aims to help fund the Court's Family Division which functions as an informational hub, a family support service, and overseer of family law.
- Maryland Family Justice Center's "Changing Lives, Restoring Hope" (VOCA) is a project aimed at strengthening efforts to provide survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and elder abuse with a wider range of services to address their traumas.
- Maryland Administrative Courts (AOC) Security Goods and Services grant funding is proposed at \$500,700.
- The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Adult Drug Court and Veterans Treatment Court integrates evidence-based substance abuse treatment, mandatory drug testing, sanctions and incentives, and transitional services.
- Office of Violence Against Women (OVW): Improving Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence aims to enhance the community response in cases of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
- Veterans' Treatment Court is a program that uses an evidence-based approach to treat veterans with substance abuse problems.

- The Proposed FY 2025 grant funding from the Maryland Office of Problem-Solving Court is \$564,600, an increase of \$39,600, or 7.5%, above the FY 2024 Approved Budget level. Specifics pertaining to the programs funded by this grant are as follows:
 - The Adult Drug Court has 36 current participants and graduated a total of 524 clients since inception, with 1027 total clients served and a current capacity of 120. It has one (1) Program Coordinator, one (1) Community Supervision Manager, one (1) Peer Recovery Specialist, and two (2) Case Managers. The ratio between participants and case manager should not exceed 30:1. *See First Round Question #27 pg. 13-14 for more information regarding statistics, demographics, staffing, and eligibility requirements.*
 - The Re-Entry Court has 30 current participants and 32 graduates since inception, with 76 total clients served and a current capacity of 40. This program has two (2) Case Managers. The ideal ratio between client and case manager would be 20:1. *See First Round Question #27 pg. 16-17 for more information regarding statistics, demographics, staffing, and eligibility requirements.*
 - The Juvenile Drug Court program has seven (7) current participants and has graduated 132 participants since inception, with 340 total clients served and a current capacity of 50. It has one (1) Department of Juvenile Services Case Manager and one (1) Circuit Court Case Manager Pending Hiring. The ideal ratio between client and case manager would be 25:1. *See First Round Question #27 pg. 17-18 for more information regarding statistics, demographics, staffing, and eligibility requirements.*