



April 15, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Wala Blegay, 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 2026 Budget Review

Budget Overview

The FY 2026 Proposed Budget for the Circuit Court is approximately \$28,908,600 million. This is an increase of \$1.43 million, or 5.0%, above the FY 2025 Approved Budget. The General Fund portion of the budget is approximately \$23.7 million, an increase of \$276,700, or 1.2% over the FY 2025 Approved Budget. The increase is primarily due to mandated salary requirements and an increase in OIT charges based on anticipated countywide costs for technology. The grant-funded portion of the Court's FY 2026 Proposed Budget is approximately \$5,184,700 million, an increase of \$157,100, or 3.1%, above the FY 2025 Approved Budget. This is mainly due to the enhancement of existing programs/services and the elimination of existing programs/services.

Fund	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2025 Estimated	% Change - Est vs App	FY 2026 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
General Fund	\$ 21,881,418	\$ 23,447,200	\$ 23,498,600	0.2%	\$ 23,723,900	\$ 276,700	1.2%
Grants	4,171,314	5,027,600	5,700,500	13.4%	5,184,700	157,100	3.1%
Total	\$ 26,052,732	\$ 28,474,800	\$ 29,199,100	2.5%	\$ 28,908,600	\$ 433,800	1.5%

Authorized Staffing - All Classifications

	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2026 Proposed	Change	% Change
General Fund	191	191	0	0.0%
Grants	53	53	0	0.0%
Total	244	244	0	0.0%

Budget Comparison - General Fund

Approved Fiscal Year 2025 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2026

Category	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2025 Estimated	FY 2026 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Compensation	\$ 12,360,041	\$ 12,915,000	\$ 13,160,100	\$ 13,254,500	\$ 339,500	2.6%
Fringe Benefits	4,033,124	4,636,500	4,408,600	4,440,300	(196,200)	-4.2%
Operating Expenses	5,488,253	5,895,700	5,884,900	5,979,100	83,400	1.4%
Capital Outlay	-	-	45,000	50,000	-	
Total	\$ 21,881,418	\$ 23,447,200	\$ 23,498,600	\$ 23,723,900	\$ 276,700	1.2%

Authorized Staffing Count - General Fund

	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2026 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 2026 Proposed Budget includes authorization for 155 full-time positions, and 36 part-time General Fund positions, which is unchanged compared to the FY 2025 Approved Budget.
- According to the Circuit Court, as of March 10, 2025, 133 of their 155 General Funded full-time positions are filled, and 36 of their 36 part-time positions are filled.
- The proposed FY 2026 budget includes 30 vacant positions of which 22 are full-time funded positions. Twelve (12) of these full-time positions are unfunded. For Grant-funded positions there are eight (8) full-time positions that are funded.
- The Court reported that its current rate of attrition is 1% which has amounted to 12 employees leaving the Court (10 resignations and 2 regular retirements). In FY 2025, the Circuit Court has not faced critical staffing challenges. However, the Court stated that “*due to a decrease in grant funding, some positions are at risk of being eliminated, which could potentially lead to critical staffing issues within the organization. As a result, directors are now faced with the challenging responsibility of identifying and securing alternative funding sources to ensure the continuity of these essential roles.*”

Fringe Benefits

- The FY 2026 General Fund Proposed Budget for fringe benefits is \$4,440,300. This is a decrease of \$196,200, or 4.2%, under the FY 2025 Approved Budget due to decreasing the fringe rate from 35.9% to 33.5% to align with projected costs.

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

Fringe Benefits Historical Trend					
	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimated	FY 2026 Proposed
Fringe Benefits Expenditures	\$ 3,745,377	\$ 3,584,064	\$ 4,033,124	\$ 4,408,600	\$ 4,440,300
Compensation Expenditures	\$11,528,868	\$11,622,187	\$12,360,041	\$13,160,100	\$13,254,500
As a % of Compensation	32.5%	30.8%	32.6%	33.5%	33.5%
Annual % Change	35.9%	-4.3%	12.5%	9.3%	0.7%

Operating Expenses

- General Fund FY 2026 operating expenses are proposed at approximately \$5,979,100 and are comprised of the following major items:
 - Office Automation \$2,426,200
 - Miscellaneous 1,700,000
 - Other Operating Equipment Repair/Maintenance 829,000
 - General & Administrative Contracts 459,000
 - General Office Supplies 164,500
 - Telephone 131,400
 - Printing 111,500
 - Training 56,800
- Overall, FY 2026 General Fund proposed operating expenses are increasing by \$83,400, or 1.4%, over the FY 2025 Approved Budget level.
- The accompanying table compares the FY 2026 Proposed Budget operating expenditures with the FY 2025 Approved Budget operating expenditures. In five (5) of the categories, the FY 2026 Proposed Budget increases planned spending over the FY 2025 Approved Budget. In four (4) of the categories, the FY 2026 Proposed Budget decreases planned spending compared to the FY 2025 Approved Budget. In five (5) of the categories, the FY 2026 Proposed Budget level remains unchanged compared to the FY 2025 Approved Budget.

Operating Objects	FY 2025 Budget	FY 2026 Proposed	FY 2025 - FY 2026	
			\$ Change	% Change
Office Automation	\$ 2,139,600	\$ 2,426,200	\$ 286,600	13%
Miscellaneous (includes Jury Fees)	1,917,000	1,700,000	(217,000)	-11%
Telephone	131,400	131,400	-	0.0%
Membership Fees	12,400	15,000	2,600	21.0%
Equipment Lease	-	-	-	#DIV/0!
General & Administrative Contracts	251,800	459,000	207,200	82.3%
Periodicals	142,400	28,500	(113,900)	-80.0%
Training	51,500	56,800	5,300	10.3%
Printing	111,500	111,500	-	0.0%
Office & Operating Equipment Non Capital	27,200	27,200	-	0.0%
General Office Supplies	164,500	164,500	-	0.0%
Interagency Charge	25,000	-	(25,000)	-100.0%
Mileage Reimbursement	27,700	30,000	2,300	8.3%
Other Operating Equipment Repair/Maintenance	893,700	829,000	(64,700)	-7%
TOTAL	\$ 5,895,700	\$ 5,979,100	\$ 83,400	1.4%

- The most significant increases between the FY 2026 Proposed Budget and the FY 2025 Approved Budget are in the Office Automation category (\$286,600 increase), which is a result of the increase in OIT technology allocation charge and General & Administrative Contracts (\$207,200 increase) which are a result of historical and anticipated expenses.
- The most significant decreases between the FY 2026 Proposed Budget and the FY 2025 Approved Budget are in the Miscellaneous category (\$217,000 decrease), Periodicals (\$113,900 decrease), and Other Operating Equipment Repair/Maintenance (\$64,700 decrease). These are all based on historical and anticipated expenses.

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 \$1,056,990.08 eligible for use through a General Fund liability account.
 - Recovery from the Fund can support the Court's Law Library Division, which has proposed FY 2026 costs of \$573,100. However, the Court has not recovered funds from this fund in the past five years because *"no financial support has been needed for the Bail Bond Commissioner and the Library Divisions"*.

HIGHLIGHTS

Workload/Performance Trends

- The Prince George's County Circuit Court currently has 25 sitting judges and eight (8) (seven assigned to domestic matters and one to foreclosure). Three Judicial seats remain vacant. Additionally, the Circuit Court continues to utilize visiting and retired judges to help meet staffing needs in FY 2025 and in FY 2026.
- The Court's caseload increased from 39,612 total cases in FY 2022 to 45,844 cases in FY 2023, to 47,604 cases in FY 2024, and an estimated increase to 49,333 in FY 2025. The Court projects the caseload to increase for FY 2026 to 51,920. *See the FY 2026 Proposed Operating Budget book pg. 301 for a breakdown of the different types of cases that support the presented numbers.*
- 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 12-18 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 six (6) participants and three (3) graduates in FY 2025 (There have been 38 participants to date). This program has one (1) Circuit Court Case Manager. The client and case manager ratio is 1:25.
- 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 four (4) participants in FY 2025 and 22 graduates since FY 2022. There have been 44 participants serviced since FY 2022. This program has one (1) Case Manager that is Pending Hiring, with a client and case manager ratio of 1:25.
- 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 16 participants, with 8 graduates in FY 2025 and 45 graduates to date. There have been 460 participants served to date. This program has one (1) Circuit Court Case Manager/Mentor Liaison Coordinator with a ratio of 1:25.
- The Truancy Reduction Court was established in FY 2009. This program targets students between the ages of 12.5 and 16.5 who were absent from school for 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 five (5) graduates in FY 2025. 166 participants have graduated to date. This program has two (2) Case Managers, with a client-to-case manager ratio of 1:20.

- The Family Justice Center (FJC) has experienced a decrease in clients served from FY 2024 to FY 2025 YTD. Between July 2024 and March 2025, the Center has served 1,179 clients to date. The Court provided that in FY 2024 there were 1,657 clients serviced. However, the Court stated that *“the variance between FY 2024 and FY 2025 to date is 478. We anticipate reaching the FY 2024 Actuals by the end of the fiscal year due to an increase in the number of clients seeking services. We serve an average of 250 clients per month”*. 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 2024, the Court received 1,817 foreclosure filings with 264 requests for mediation in FY 2024. In CY 2025, as of March 28, 2025, the Court has received 328 foreclosure filings with 114 requests for mediation in FY 2025.

Information Technology

- The Court has the following IT initiatives ongoing in FY 2025 and continuing into FY 2026:

FY 2025

- Completed all cameras in the courthouse cells
 - Bourne
 - Marbury
 - Marbury Expansion
- Installation of a sub-command center
 - Fire Control
 - Sallyport

Initiatives

- Installation of arm security barrier
 - Judges Drive
 - Water Street
- Sub Command Center in Bourne Lockup.
- Billboards outside of 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 \$67,277,000. The project has estimated total expenditures of \$49,277,000 as of the end of FY 2025 and \$3,00,000 in the Proposed FY 2026 CIP Budget.

Budget Comparison - Grants

Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2026

Category	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2025 Estimated	FY 2026 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Compensation	\$ 2,721,285	\$ 3,577,500	\$ 3,586,900	\$ 3,250,100	\$ (327,400)	-9.2%
Fringe Benefits	772,537	835,900	1,018,000	1,340,300	504,400	60.3%
Operating Expenses	1,101,545	1,010,800	1,574,500	1,025,500	14,700	1.5%
Capital Outlay	-	-	-	-	-	
Total	\$ 4,595,367	\$ 5,424,200	\$ 6,179,400	\$ 5,615,900	\$ 191,700	3.5%

Authorized Staffing Count - Grants

	FY 2025 Approved	FY 2026 Proposed	Change Amount	Percentage Change
Full-Time	51	49	-2	-3.9%
Part-Time	2	4	2	100.0%
Total	53	53	0	0.0%

Grant Programs

- The FY 2026 Proposed Budget for the Circuit Court's grant programs is approximately \$5.6 million, which is an increase of \$191,700, or 3.5%, above the FY 2025 Approved Budget. The increase is due to the addition of the Family Justice Center grant.
- In FY 2026, grant funding is anticipated for 49 full-time and four (4) part-time positions. This is a change from FY 2025 due to a reallocation of two full-time positions to part-time.
- Grant-funded compensation is decreasing by \$327,400, or 9.2%, under the FY 2025 Approved levels, and Fringe Benefits are increasing by \$504,400, or 60.3%, above the FY 2025 Approved levels.
- Grant-funded operating expenses are increasing by \$14,700, or 1.5%, above the FY 2025 Approved levels.
- The following chart illustrates grant funding proposed for FY 2026, the grant source, and any funding match the County is required to qualify for the grant:

Grant Name	Grant Source	FY 2026 Budgeted Grant	
		Amount	County Match
		(Outside County)	
Cooperative Reimbursement Agreement	State	\$ 798,100	\$ 411,800
Maryland Administrative Courts - Security Good and Services	State	\$ 130,000	
Economic Justice Initiative	State	\$ 66,800	\$ 17,100
Family Division Legislative Initiative	State	\$ 2,782,500	\$ -
Family Justice Center's "Improved Victim Assistance... (VOCG)	State	\$ 675,800	\$ 2,300
Engaging Men and Boys as Allies	Federal	\$ -	\$ -
Office of Problem Solving Courts (OPSC)	State	\$ 642,200	\$ -
Maryland Mediation Conflict and Resolution Office (MACRO)	State	\$ 89,300	\$ -
Enhancing Survivors Access to Justice and Supportive Services		\$ -	\$ -
Total		\$ 5,184,700	\$ 431,200

- 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 an overseer of family law.
 - Maryland Family Justice Center's "Improving Victim Assistance with Enhanced Ability to Critical Resources and Supportive Services" (VOCG) provides survivors with immediate support by staffing the domestic violence courtroom with Intake Specialists three days a week.
 - Maryland Administrative Courts (AOC) Security Goods and Services grant funding is proposed at \$130,000.
- The Proposed FY 2026 grant funding from the Maryland Office of Problem-Solving Court is \$642,200, an increase of \$77,600, or 13.7%, above the FY 2025 Approved Budget level. Specifics pertaining to the programs funded by this grant are as follows:
 - The Adult Drug Court has 28 current participants and graduated a total of 527 clients since inception, with 1058 total clients served and a current capacity of 60. 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 #29 pg. 17-18 for more information regarding statistics, demographics, staffing, and eligibility requirements.*
 - The Re-Entry Court has 30 current participants and 40 graduates since inception, with 144 total clients served and a current capacity of 60. This program has three (3) Case Managers. The ratio between client and case manager is 20:1. *See First Round Question #29 pg. 21-22 for more information regarding statistics, demographics, staffing, and eligibility requirements.*

The Juvenile Drug Court program has four (4) current participants and has graduated 134 participants since inception, with 350 total clients served and a current capacity of 25. It has one (1) Department of Juvenile Services Case Manager and one (1) Circuit Court Case Manager. The ratio between client and case manager is 25:1. *See First Round Question #29 pg. 22 for more information regarding statistics, demographics, staffing, and eligibility requirements.*

- Family Justice Center:

- The Family Justice Center is a collaborative interagency model that includes formal partnerships with six (6) county agencies to coordinate a comprehensive array of services to address survivors' immediate crisis and/or more long-term systematic needs. The six (6) County agencies are the Police Department, the Office of the Sheriff, the State's Attorney's Office, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Family Services, and the Health Department.