

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 978
Judiciary

(Delegate Young, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Courts - Maryland Judicial Public Text Messaging System - Report

This bill requires the Administrative Office of the Courts to submit a report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, on the Maryland Judicial Public Text Messaging System, as specified. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Judiciary can submit the required reports with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The “Maryland Judicial Public Text Messaging System” means text notification about court events and related case information permanently authorized under the Administrative Order of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland on April 22, 2020.

The report must include the following information on the system for the prior fiscal year:

- number of individuals who requested notification under the system and the number who declined to receive notification;
- total number of notifications sent regarding proceedings;
- number of notifications sent at least seven days before a proceeding;
- number of notifications sent six or fewer days (and the number of those notifications sent at least one day) before a proceeding;

- number of notifications that failed to deliver;
- number of requests by participants for assistance; and
- rate of failure to appear by participants in the system compared to individuals declining participation in the system.

The report must also include a review of any future plans for development, expansion, and implementation of the system.

Current Law: Pursuant to authorization within a 2020 Administrative Order of the Court of Appeals (now the Supreme Court of Maryland), the Judiciary has commenced statewide implementation of a system to provide text notification of court events. Criteria and an implementation schedule for the text messaging system is established by the State Court Administrator in the District Court of Maryland and the circuit courts, after consultation with the Chief Judge of the District Court and the administrative judges of the circuit courts.

Currently, the Judiciary’s text messaging service (Public Judicial Access) is utilized for District Court cases; **Exhibit 1** illustrates related data on recent usage. For subscribers, all case and related case hearing events are sent by text message. A registration may be canceled at any time. The Judiciary plans to expand the case text messaging service to circuit courts, and a project is underway to send text messages (and reminders) to potential jurors about service dates.

Exhibit 1
Public Judicial Access Utilization – District Court Cases
January to November 2023

<u>Type of Text Activity</u>	<u>Monthly Average</u>
Registrations	3,003
Opt-ins	2,545
Opt-outs (Unsubscribe)	1,496
Hearing Notification Sent	22,919
Case Notifications Sent	4,139
One-day Trial Reminders Sent	9,270
Seven-day Trial Reminders Sent	9,177
Help Requests Received	395
Undelivered Messages	219

Source: Administrative Office of the Courts

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

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

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 20, 2024
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