

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 544

(Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee)(By Request -
Maryland Judicial Conference)

Judicial Proceedings

Judiciary

Courtroom Security - Minimum Adequate Security Standard

This bill establishes a minimum adequate security standard for courtroom security at all courthouse facilities in the State. Any entity responsible for providing courthouse security must use best efforts to meet the minimum standards for courtroom security. Certain standards are applicable beginning July 1, 2027, with additional standards beginning July 1, 2029. The bill requires a court security officer to meet the qualifications for a special police officer, as defined in § 3-301 of the Public Safety Article.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Judiciary can comply with the bill's minimum security standards in the courts for which the State is responsible for security using existing resources. General fund expenditures increase by \$5.6 million in FY 2027 only; this reflects the spending of funds included in the FY 2027 budget as passed by the General Assembly for purposes related to the bill, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Local government expenditures increase, in some jurisdictions *significantly*, beginning in FY 2027 for local governments to hire additional staff for courtroom security. Local government grant revenues and expenditures increase in FY 2027, as discussed below. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Beginning July 1, 2027, any entity responsible for providing courthouse security must use best efforts to have present during proceedings at least:

- one court security officer in each courtroom for any *criminal, family, or juvenile* proceeding;
- two court security officers in each courtroom for any proceeding involving an incarcerated individual or an individual who may be remanded to custody as a result of the proceeding; and
- one additional court security officer for every four or fewer courtrooms on each floor of the courthouse.

Beginning July 1, 2029, any entity responsible for providing courthouse security must use best efforts to have present during proceedings at least:

- one court security officer in each courtroom for *any* proceeding;
- two court security officers in each courtroom for any proceeding involving an incarcerated individual or an individual who may be remanded to custody as a result of the proceeding; and
- one additional court security officer for every four or fewer courtrooms on each floor of the courthouse.

Current Law/Background: There are no minimum adequate security standards for courtroom security specified in statute. Generally, security for the appellate courts and the District Court is funded by the State. The security for circuit courts (and the orphans' courts) is funded by county budgets and provided by the sheriffs' offices in each county and Baltimore City.

Chapters 414 and 415 of 2024 (Judge Andrew F. Wilkinson Judicial Security Act) created the Task Force to Ensure the Safety of Judicial Facilities, staffed by the Administrative Office of the Courts, to, among other things, identify (1) minimum requirements for courthouse safety, including the minimum number of security officers to be present in each type of judicial proceeding in a circuit court or in the District Court and (2) minimum qualifications for security officers. Also, the task force was required to develop a legislative proposal to ensure that the minimum standards are met.

In December 2024, the task force issued its [report](#), which, among other things, recommended minimum adequate security standards for courtrooms in the State and qualifications for court security officers; the prescribed staffing standards in the bill align with the task force's recommendations.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: As noted above, the Judiciary is responsible for the security of the Supreme Court of Maryland, the Appellate Court of Maryland, and the District Court of Maryland. The Judiciary advises that it has sufficient staffing levels to meet the minimum courthouse security standards for these courts.

As noted above, local governments are responsible for courthouse security in the circuit courts. The fiscal 2027 budget as passed by the General Assembly includes \$5.6 million to provide grants to local jurisdictions to enhance security in the circuit courts; the budgeted funding is not contingent on the bill. Although the bill neither requires the provision of such grants nor shifts the responsibility for circuit courthouse security from locals to the State, this analysis reflects this budgeted funding consistent with the bill's purpose. Accordingly, general fund expenditures increase by \$5.6 million in fiscal 2027 as grants are awarded to local jurisdictions to be used to hire additional court security personnel.

The Judiciary further advises that based on reported vacancies and funded positions, circuit courts in the State need an estimated 206 additional court security officers to meet the minimum security standards in fiscal 2028 and 2030. Accordingly, local expenditures increase, and in some jurisdictions *significantly*, beginning in fiscal 2027 for sheriff's offices to hire additional staff in order to prepare to use best efforts to meet the minimum adequate security standards that first become effective July 1, 2027 (fiscal 2028).

While noting that jurisdictions are not explicitly required to meet the minimum security standards, it is expected that the bill's requirement for responsible entities to use *best efforts* requires local jurisdictions to hire additional staff. Based on responses from nine counties (including Baltimore City) to a request for information on the impact in fiscal 2027, the Department of Legislative Services advises that while some counties (Carroll, Charles, and Kent) report the need for between 2 and 10 additional court security officers at a cost of less than \$500,000 to meet the minimum security standards, others anticipate more significant expenditures. For example, some counties (Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Harford) indicate the need for between 3 to 15 deputy sheriffs at an estimated cost of between \$1.0 million to \$3.0 million; Baltimore City and Prince George's County report higher estimated expenditures (for Baltimore City over \$4.5 million for 56 additional court security officers, and for Prince George's County approximately \$10.0 million for 47 additional deputy sheriffs).

Local expenditures in some jurisdictions may be partially supported by the aforementioned State grant funding in fiscal 2027. However, the funds in the fiscal 2027 budget will not fully offset all ongoing costs associated with staffing, training, scheduling, and overtime. The overall fiscal impact on local governments will vary based on courthouse size, caseload, current security staffing and vacancy levels, and the ability to recruit and retain qualified court security officers. For any local law enforcement agencies that receive grant

funding from the Judiciary to meet the minimum security standards, local government grant revenues and expenditures increase correspondingly.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 621 and HB 789 of 2025.

Designated Cross File: HB 492 (Chair, Judiciary Committee)(By Request - Maryland Judicial Conference) - Judiciary.

Information Source(s): Allegany, Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Charles, Harford, Kent, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 18, 2026
jg/jkb Third Reader - March 10, 2026
Revised - Clarification - April 14, 2026
Revised - Budget Information - April 14, 2026

Analysis by: Joanne E. Tetlow

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510