

I_136_2139-3

136th General Assembly
Regular Session
2025-2026

Sub. H. B. No. 626

To enact section 2709.01 of the Revised Code to
require courts to supply electronic notification
of hearings to defendants in criminal and
traffic cases and to make an appropriation.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That section 2709.01 of the Revised Code be
enacted to read as follows:

Sec. 2709.01. (A) (1) The automated court appearance
reminder grant program is created in the division of criminal
justice services within the department of public safety. Subject
to available funds, the program shall provide for a court
reminder program that allows the court to send a text or
electronic mail message to notify all criminal and traffic
defendants of scheduled court appearances.

(2) The executive director of the division of criminal
justice services shall make available to each clerk of courts
for every municipal, county, and common pleas court the
automated court appearance reminder program. The program shall
be made available to every court at no cost to the court, and
the courts shall operate the program. The purposes of the



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<u>program shall include:</u>	20
<u>(a) Reducing costs associated with defendants who fail to appear for a scheduled court appearance;</u>	21
<u>(b) Improving the efficiency of courts;</u>	22
<u>(c) Reminding criminal defendants to appear at each scheduled court appearance;</u>	23
<u>(d) Reducing the number of criminal defendants who are admitted to and confined in a county jail solely due to the defendant's failure to appear for a scheduled court appearance.</u>	24
<u>(3) The program shall do all of the following:</u>	25
<u>(a) Comply with applicable state and federal laws requiring the consent of an individual before sending a reminder by text message;</u>	26
<u>(b) Provide three text or electronic mail reminders before each court appearance, with at least one message sent the day before the court appearance;</u>	27
<u>(c) Use plain language that includes, at a minimum, the date and time of appearance, court name and address, consequences for nonappearance, and contact information for questions relating to the appearance;</u>	28
<u>(d) Allow for the defendant to select the language in which the reminders will be sent;</u>	29
<u>(e) For court appearances that can be attended virtually, provide the link to the virtual court appearance in at least the final reminder sent before the appearance;</u>	30
<u>(f) Provide at least one text or electronic mail notice within one day after any missed court appearance, to notify the</u>	31
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defendant how to resolve the missed appearance, including how to 47
remove a warrant if one has been issued. 48

(B) Each court, as part of the program, shall do all of 49
the following: 50

(1) Establish procedures for court personnel to confirm or 51
update text or electronic mail contact information at each court 52
appearance; 53

(2) Document each occurrence of a criminal defendant 54
receiving a text or electronic mail message reminder; 55

(3) Identify criminal defendants with scheduled court 56
appearances who lack access to devices with the technological 57
capability of receiving text or electronic mail messages; 58

(4) Document the number of criminal defendants who fail to 59
appear at scheduled court appearances after being sent one or 60
more text or electronic mail message reminders; 61

(5) Include the technological capability to provide 62
additional information to criminal defendants concerning 63
scheduled court appearances including, but not limited to, the 64
location of the court appearance, available transportation 65
options, court closures or changes in court dates, procedures 66
for defendants who are unable to attend court appearances, and 67
instructions about how to resolve a missed appearance and any 68
resulting warrant; 69

(6) Automatically enroll all defendants to receive text or 70
electronic mail message reminders for each court appearance, if 71
the defendant has provided information for receiving text or 72
electronic mail messages, and with all messages providing 73
defendants with the option to opt-out of receiving reminders; 74

- (7) Partner with local law enforcement agencies, local governments, and local public defenders to ensure that the intake processes or forms relating to a defendant's court appearance include fields to record the person's telephone number and electronic mail contact information, and that law enforcement, corrections, and court staff are educated, trained, and required to secure and convey that information to the court reminder program; 75
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- (8) Provide one or more publicly available internet web sites through which eligible criminal and traffic defendants may request text or electronic mail reminders; 83
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- (9) Record the average amount of days in between a warrant being issued for a failure to appear and the warrant being removed, if applicable; 86
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- (10) Collect data concerning the number of the following: 89
- (a) Defendants eligible for the court reminder program; 90
- (b) Defendants who provide an electronic mail or cellular telephone number upon arrest or citation; 91
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- (c) Defendants successfully enrolled with electronic mail or cellular telephone contact information in the court reminder program; 93
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- (d) Reminders sent, by electronic mail and by text message; 96
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- (e) Messages successfully delivered, by electronic mail and by text message; 98
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- (f) Times a defendant did not appear at a scheduled court appearance and whether a non-appearing defendant was sent reminders by electronic mail and by text message, and if so, how 100
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<u>many reminders were sent to that defendant;</u>	103
<u>(g) Defendants who opt out of receiving reminders;</u>	104
<u>(11) Transmit the data collected under division (B) (10) of this section to the administrative director of the supreme court for publication by the supreme court.</u>	105 106 107
Section 2. Within one year after the effective date of this section, the Department of Public Safety, in coordination with the Office of Budget and Management, shall certify an amount to develop or contract for the development of the automated court appearance reminder program. Upon certification, the Department of Public Safety Director shall obtain the approval of the controlling board for the appropriation of funds to an appropriation item selected by the Director of Budget and Management. Upon the approval of the Controlling Board, the additional amounts are hereby appropriated.	108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117
The Department of Administrative Services may, in collaboration with the Division of Criminal Justice Services, recommend vendors for the automated court appearance reminder program. The Department of Administrative Services and the Division of Criminal Justice Services shall employ the most cost effective option between development of the program or contracting with an outside vendor for development and deployment of the program. Any such contract is subject to Controlling Board approval. If the contract is not approved by the Controlling Board, the Department of Administrative Services and the Division of Criminal Justice Services may select another vendor using the same selection means and present the contract to the Controlling Board.	118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130
Any vendor selected to develop the automated court	131

appearance reminder program shall have the ability to generate	132
the reports required under section 2709.01 of the Revised Code	133
in the functionality of the program.	134