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# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research  
and Drafting

Legislative Budget  
Office

**H.B. 626**  
**136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**

## Bill Analysis

**Version:** As Introduced

**Primary Sponsor:** Rep. Williams

Shalanda R. Plowden, Attorney

### SUMMARY

- Requires courts to supply electronic notification of hearings to defendants in criminal and traffic cases.
- Makes an appropriation.

### DETAILED ANALYSIS

#### Program for electronic notification of hearings

Under the bill, the Administrative Director of the Ohio Supreme Court must develop, make available, and require each clerk of courts for every municipal, county, and common pleas court to employ 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. The program must be made available to every court at no cost to the court.<sup>1</sup>

The purposes of the program include:<sup>2</sup>

- Reducing costs associated with defendants who fail to appear for a scheduled court appearance;
- Improving the efficiency of courts;
- Reminding criminal defendants to appear at each scheduled court appearance;

<sup>1</sup> R.C. 2709.01(A)(1).

<sup>2</sup> R.C. 2709.01(A)(1)(a) to (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.

The program must do all of the following:<sup>3</sup>

- Comply with applicable state and federal laws requiring the consent of an individual before sending a reminder by text message;
- Provide three text or electronic mail reminders before each court appearance, with at least one message sent the day before the court appearance;
- 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;
- Allow for the defendant to select the language in which the reminders will be sent;
- 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;
- Provide at least one text or electronic mail notice within one day after any missed court appearance, to notify the defendant how to resolve the missed appearance, including how to remove a warrant if one has been issued.

Each court, as part of the program, must do all of the following:<sup>4</sup>

- Establish procedures for court personnel to confirm or update text or electronic mail contact information at each court appearance;
- Document each occurrence of a criminal defendant receiving a text or electronic mail message reminder;
- Identify criminal defendants with scheduled court appearances who lack access to devices with technological capability of receiving text or electronic mail messages;
- Document the number of criminal defendants who fail to appear at scheduled court appearances after being sent one or more text or electronic mail message reminders;
- Include the technological capability to provide additional information to criminal defendants concerning scheduled court appearances including, but not limited to, the location of the court appearance, available transportation options, court closures or changes in court dates, procedures for defendants who are unable to attend court appearances, and instructions about how to resolve a missed appearance and any resulting warrant;

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<sup>3</sup> R.C. 2709.01(A)(2).

<sup>4</sup> R.C. 2709.01(B).

- Automatically enroll all defendants to receive text or electronic mail message reminders for each court appearance, if the defendant has provided information for receiving text or electronic mail messages, and with all messages providing defendants with the option to opt-out of receiving reminders;
- Partner with local law enforcement agencies, local governments, and local public defenders to ensure that the intake process 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;
- Provide one or more publicly available internet websites through which eligible criminal and traffic defendants may request text or electronic mail reminders;
- Record the average amount of days in between a warrant being issued for a failure to appear and the warrant being removed, if applicable;
- Collect data concerning the number of the following:
  - Defendants eligible for the court reminder program;
  - Defendants who provide an electronic mail or cellular telephone number upon arrest or citation;
  - Defendants successfully enrolled with electronic mail or cellular telephone contact information in the court reminder program;
  - Reminders sent, by electronic mail and by text message;
  - Messages successfully delivered, by electronic mail and by text message;
  - 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 many reminders were sent to that defendant;
  - Defendants who opt out of receiving reminders;
- Transmit the data collected under the above requirements to the Administrative Director of the Ohio Supreme Court for publication by the Ohio Supreme Court.

## **Appropriation**

The bill appropriates \$6,000,000 in FY 2026 and \$1,000,000 in FY 2027 from GRF item 005506, Automated Court Appearance Reminder Program, to be used to implement the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Program as described above.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sections 2, 3, and 4.

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## HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	12-08-25

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