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H.B. 626
(1_136_2139-3)
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 626's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: In House Judiciary

Primary Sponsor: Rep. Williams

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

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Highlights

- The Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) within the Department of Public Safety (DPS) will incur costs to develop, or contract to develop, the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Grant Program.
- The bill authorizes a process to appropriate funds after DPS coordinates with the Office of Budget and Management to certify the amount needed to develop, or contract for services to develop, the Program. The amount certified must be approved and appropriated by the Controlling Board. The bill does not specify the funding source, but will likely be from funds appropriated from the General Revenue Fund.
- The bill requires the Program to be made available at no cost to municipal courts, county courts, and courts of common pleas. Courts not currently using an automated court text reminder program will see increased administrative costs to implement and maintain such a program. Conversely, courts which currently have such a system may realize a cost savings when using a system provided at no charge by OCJS. The magnitude of any new costs or potential savings will vary by court.

Detailed Analysis

The bill creates the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Grant Program in the Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) within the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Once implemented, the Program will allow courts to send a text or electronic mail message to notify all criminal and traffic defendants of scheduled court appearances. The bill outlines the parameters and manner that the notifications are to be sent by the courts.

OCJS is required to make the Program available to the clerk of each municipal, county, and common pleas court at no cost. The bill provides a process for seeking funding for the development costs incurred by OCJS.

Fiscal effects

Development costs

Under the bill, DPS, in coordination with the Office of Budget and Management, is required to certify an amount to develop, or contract for the development, of the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Grant Program within one year of the bill's effective date and appropriates that amount subject to Controlling Board approval. The bill permits the Department of Administrative Services to recommend vendors for the Program, in collaboration with OCJS, and specifies that the most cost-effective option for program development must be used. Any outside vendor selected must have the ability to implement the bill's reporting requirements and the contract must be approved by the Controlling Board.

As a result, OCJS will incur indeterminate additional costs to develop, or contract to develop, the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Grant Program. The magnitude of such costs will depend on several factors, most notably whether the Program is ultimately developed internally or by an outside vendor, and if by an outside vendor, the specific terms of the contract. The amount certified, approved by the Controlling Board, and ultimately appropriated, will presumably come from the General Revenue Fund and offset the costs incurred to develop the Program. To the extent that there are ongoing costs associated with continued administration of the Program, those costs would be borne by DPS. The Program is to be offered at no cost to municipal courts, county courts, and courts of common pleas.

Operation of the Program – local courts

The bill requires each municipal court, county court, and court of common pleas to establish procedures to maintain the Program including enrolling criminal defendants to receive text or electronic mail message reminders for court appearances and updating contact information, and to document and report certain information to the Ohio Supreme Court. It is likely that courts will experience an increase in administrative costs to implement and maintain an electronic reminder program offset somewhat by increased administrative efficiencies from a potential decrease in missed court dates. Some courts which have already implemented a court text reminder program may realize a cost savings when using a system provided at no charge by OCJS. However, these savings may not completely offset the increased data collection costs. The magnitude of any savings will depend on current costs which vary by court and notification volume.

Synopsis of Fiscal Effect Changes

The As Introduced version of the bill required the Administrative Director of the Ohio Supreme Court to develop, make available, and require each municipal, county, and common pleas court clerk 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. That version of the bill appropriated \$6.0 million in FY 2026 and \$1.0 million in FY 2027 to GRF appropriation item 005506, Automated Court Appearance Reminder Program (created by the As Introduced version of the bill) to be used by the Supreme Court to implement

the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Program. These provisions and the appropriation are removed from the substitute version of the bill.

The substitute version of the bill (I_136_2139-3) shifts development of the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Grant Program from the Ohio Supreme Court to OCJS within DPS and provides an alternate funding mechanism for the Program. Under the bill, DPS, in coordination with the Office of Budget and Management, is required to certify an amount to develop, or contract for the development, of the Automated Court Appearance Reminder Grant Program within one year of the bill's effective date and appropriates that amount subject to Controlling Board approval.