



DEPARTMENT OF AUDITS AND ACCOUNTS

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January 22, 2020

Honorable Mandi Ballinger
Chairman, House Juvenile Justice Committee
218-B State Capitol
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note
House Bill 439 (LC 41 1854)

Dear Chairman Ballinger:

This bill would make juvenile court judges an elected position and raise their minimum compensation. The responsibility of superior court judges to appoint juvenile court judges would be eliminated, and all associate juvenile court judges would be converted to juvenile court judges. Each juvenile court judge would be elected on a nonpartisan basis during general elections and would serve a term of four years. The bill also removes the ability of superior court judges to assume the duties of juvenile court judges in circuits where juvenile court judges did not previously exist. Lastly, the bill would increase the minimum salary of juvenile court judges, and the pro rata base salary of part time juvenile court judges, from \$100,000 to \$115,000 annually. This bill does not alter the formula of state grants for circuits with juvenile court judges.

This bill would require additional spending by the Office of the Secretary of State (SOS), the Georgia Judicial Retirement System (GJRS), and by some county governments.

- Employees with SOS would need to add juvenile court judge races to existing ballot builds designed for county governments; however, this would result in minimal cost and require no additional state funding.
- Although the impact of increased salaries on GJRS will not be fully addressed until the next actuarial report, we estimate that the state portion of GJRS paid through state grants to counties will increase by \$40,500 based on an assumed employer contribution rate of 9.13%. GJRS is the only benefit for juvenile court judges which is not directly offered by county governments in the respective circuits.
- Fifteen full-time and 21 part-time juvenile court judges are paid less than the new salary minimum of \$115,000. County governments employing the judges would be responsible

for salary increases and additional fringe benefit costs. We estimated additional salaries at \$443,000. The fringe benefit rate varies by county government and cannot be reliably estimated.

Sincerely,



Greg S. Griffin
State Auditor



Kelly Farr, Director
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/KF/im