



## DEPARTMENT OF AUDITS AND ACCOUNTS

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February 3, 2020

Honorable Jesse Stone  
Chairman, Senate Judiciary  
325-A Coverdell Legislative Office Building  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

SUBJECT: Fiscal Note  
Senate Bill (LC 41 2226)

Dear Chairman Stone:

The bill defines the term 'domestic violence' and provides for the establishment of domestic violence courts. It would also establish requirements for each domestic violence court division, including the establishment of a planning group, and would require the Council of Accountability Court Judges of Georgia to establish standards and practices, provide technical assistance, and create and manage a certification and peer review process. In addition, it establishes requirements for domestic violence courts to be eligible for state funds.

The bill would result in administrative costs for the Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ) and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, as well as grant funding provided to domestic violence courts.<sup>1</sup>

### **Impact on the Council of Accountability Court Judges**

Establishing responsibility for domestic violence courts under CACJ would result in the creation of a new unit for this court type, with additional personnel costs, training, travel, and payments to AOC for support (see Table 1). The estimated cost of \$242,000 is discussed in more detail below.

**Table 1: Administrative Costs to CACJ from LC 41 2226**

Salaries and Benefits	\$147,500
Project Coordinator Travel and Training	\$15,000
Training of Current Staff	\$20,000
Support Service Payments to Administrative Office of the Courts	\$54,500
Treatment Fidelity Visits	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$242,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> The legislation states that CACJ should collaborate with the Georgia Commission on Family Violence (GCFV) but does not establish any additional requirements for GCFV. If it was responsible for training of courts, GCFV estimated it would require an additional 1.5 FTEs to develop and implement a training program at the cost of \$126,628.

It should be noted that CACJ receives appropriations through two programs: Judicial Council – Council of Accountability Court Judges and Criminal Justice Coordinating Council – Council of Accountability Court Judges. The discussion below includes funding for both programs.

- *Salaries and Benefits* – Approximately \$98,000 would pay the salary and benefits for a project coordinator to oversee peer review, certification of courts, and technical assistance as required by the bill. The position would also serve as staff to the judges to help develop standards and best practices. The position would be in the Judicial Council program.

An additional \$50,000 in salaries and benefits are anticipated for current staff with new responsibilities. This includes approximately \$16,000 for staff funded through the Judicial Council appropriation and \$34,000 for staff paid funded through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council appropriation.

- *Project Coordinator Activities* – CACJ estimated \$15,000 for the project coordinator’s travel and training related to peer review, technical assistance, and training of courts. The funding would be in the Judicial Council program.
- *Training of CACJ Staff* – CACJ estimated \$20,000 for training of existing staff. This includes \$10,000 for staff funded through the Judicial Council appropriation and \$10,000 for staff paid funded through the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council appropriation.
- *Payments to the Administrative Office of the Courts* – AOC provides support in the areas of legal, IT, research, and office space. CACJ estimated an increase in payments to AOC of approximately \$54,500. AOC-related funding is provided through the Judicial Council program.
- *Treatment Fidelity Visits* – These visits ensure that the court’s treatment providers are properly implementing best practice treatments. CACJ estimated costs of approximately \$5,000 for these visits. This funding would be in the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council appropriation.

### **Impact on the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC)**

CJCC does not expect initial administrative costs but would need to add a grant specialist at a cost of \$64,500 (\$40,000 salary and \$24,500 fringe) if the number of domestic violence courts increased substantially beyond five.

### **Cost to Fund Domestic Violence Courts**

We cannot provide a reliable estimate of the number of domestic violence courts that may be created; however, state grant levels for other types of accountability courts provide a starting point for estimating costs.

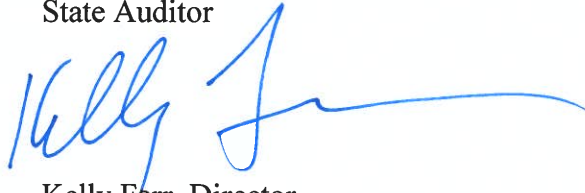
CACJ estimates the state cost to be \$107,000 to \$176,000 per year per court, based on the grants provided to DUI and adult felony drug courts through the CJCC. This amount includes the implementation cost for case management systems and cost to support training for domestic violence courts. The lower cost does not include a coordinator position and is based on the lower state grants provided to DUI courts. DUI courts impact county detention centers, and domestic

violence courts are expected to as well, and local jurisdictions typically contribute funding for personnel to support DUI courts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg S. Griffin".

Greg S. Griffin  
State Auditor

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kelly Farr".

Kelly Farr, Director  
Office of Planning and Budget

GSG/KF/nc