



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF
BUDGET AND PROGRAM PLANNING

Fiscal Note 2027 Biennium

Bill#/Title: SB0318.01: Generally revise child custody laws

Primary Sponsor: Dennis Lenz

Status: As Introduced

☐ Included in the Executive Budget

☒ Needs to be included in HB 2

☐ Significant Local Gov Impact

☐ Significant Long-Term Impacts

☒ Technical Concerns

☐ Dedicated Revenue Form Attached

FISCAL SUMMARY

	<u>FY 2026 Difference</u>	<u>FY 2027 Difference</u>	<u>FY 2028 Difference</u>	<u>FY 2029 Difference</u>
Expenditures				
General Fund (01)	\$61,238	\$61,238	\$62,157	\$63,089
Revenues				
General Fund (01)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Impact	<u>(\$61,238)</u>	<u>(\$61,238)</u>	<u>(\$62,157)</u>	<u>(\$63,089)</u>
General Fund Balance				

Description of fiscal impact

SB 318 establishes child abuse and domestic violence training requirements for judges, standing masters, and guardians ad litem in child custody proceedings. The judicial branch is responsible for the cost of training district court judges and standing masters.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Assumptions

Judiciary

1. Section 3 amends the definition of a judge in 3-1-1501, MCA, Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Training and Certification of Judges, to include District Court judges.
2. The Judicial Branch already provides two trainings each fiscal year specific to courts of limited jurisdiction judges. The counties reimburse the Judicial Branch for the cost related to the training for limited court judges and as such there are no additional costs for limited court judge training as a result of this bill.
3. Because of the section 3 amendment, section 2(2) makes the two annual training sessions currently provided for District Court judges and Standing Masters mandatory.
4. The Judicial Branch assumes an increase in costs related to requiring all 51 District Court judges and 9 Standing Masters to attend the two training sessions already provided for District Court judges but made mandatory in section 2(2).
5. In FY 2024, the average cost of the two trainings was \$18,791 with an average of 26 attendees for an average per attendee cost of \$723. The average cost includes lodging, meals, and mileage. The increase to venue and speaker fees is estimated to be immaterial and is not included in this analysis. The estimated cost for 60 attendees (51 judges plus 9 standing masters) is \$43,380, for a total additional cost of \$24,589 per conference (\$43,380 for all 60 attendees less \$18,791 actual expenditures incurred). The additional cost for each fiscal year is \$49,178 (\$24,589 increase per conference X 2 conferences).

6. The Judicial Branch assumes the 15 hours of child custody training required every 2 years will be met by providing 3.75 hours of training that complies with the requirements established in section 2 (5) at each training session, with the 15 hours being met over the two-year timeframe.
7. The Judicial Branch assumes an average of 5 new judges or standing masters will need the 20 hour orientation each fiscal year.
8. It assumed that course work provided through the National Judicial College (NJC) will meet the 20-hour orientation requirements. The estimated cost per individual is \$2,412 and includes round-trip airfare, four nights lodging, four days of out of state meals, and registration fees. The total annual cost to meet the 20-hour orientation requirement is \$12,060 (\$2,412 X 5 individuals).
9. Costs in FY 2026 and FY 2027 \$61,238 each year (\$49,178 additional costs for the two annual training session + \$12,060 for orientation hours through NJC).
10. FY 2028 costs are \$62,157 (FY 2027 costs increased by 1.5% for inflation).
11. FY 2029 costs are \$63,089 (FY 2028 costs increased by 1.5% for inflation)

Fiscal Analysis Table

Judiciary				
	FY 2026 Difference	FY 2027 Difference	FY 2028 Difference	FY 2029 Difference
Fiscal Impact				
Expenditures				
Operating Expenses	\$61,238	\$61,238	\$62,157	\$63,089
TOTAL Expenditures	\$61,238	\$61,238	\$62,157	\$63,089
Funding of Expenditures				
General Fund (01)	\$61,238	\$61,238	\$62,157	\$63,089
TOTAL Funding of Expenditures	\$61,238	\$61,238	\$62,157	\$63,089
Revenues				
Net Impact to Fund Balance (Revenue minus Funding of Expenditures)				
General Fund (01)	(\$61,238)	(\$61,238)	(\$62,157)	(\$63,089)

Technical Concerns

Judiciary

1. The bill codifies section 2 as part of Title 3, chapter 1, part 15, which is specifically for training courts of limited jurisdiction judges. Section 3 amends 3-1-1501, MCA, to include district court judges in the definition of a judge. District court judges are not limited court judges.
2. Section 2 includes training for limited court judges and district court judges and standing masters. This new section makes counties responsible for paying for the training costs of district court judges and standing masters.

NO SPONSOR SIGNATURE

Sponsor's Initials

Date

3/4

Budget Director's Initials

3/4/2025

Date

RD