



Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Maryland

Matthew Barrett
*Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Administrators*

Hon. Bibi M. Berry
Circuit Court for Montgomery County

Hon. Wayne A. Brooks
*District Court of Maryland
Howard County*

Hon. Yvette M. Bryant
*Chair, Standing Committee on Rules of
Practice and Procedure*

Hon. Debra J. Burch
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin
Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Hon. Heather S. DeWees
Chair, Conference of Circuit Court Clerks

Nancy Faulkner
Secretary, Deputy State Court Administrator

Maria Fields
*Administrative Clerk, District 8
Baltimore County*

Hon. Fred S. Hecker
Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges

Hon. Geoffrey G. Hengerer
*District Court of Maryland
Baltimore City*

Hon. James A. Kenney, III
Chair, Senior Judges Committee

Hon. Stacy A. Mayer
Circuit Court for Baltimore County

Hon. John P. Morrissey
Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

Hon. Harris P. Murphy
Circuit Court for Kent County

Kara Pollak
*Vice-Chair, Conference of Circuit Court
Administrators*

Judy Rupp
State Court Administrator

Rebecca Sloane
*Administrative Clerk, District 3
Cecil County*

Hon. Shaem C. P. Spencer
*District Court of Maryland
Anne Arundel County*

Roberta Warnken
Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland

Hon. E. Greg Wells
Chief Judge, Appellate Court of Maryland

MARYLAND JUDICIAL COUNCIL

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Meeting Minutes
May 28, 2025

Judicial Council Members Present:

Hon. Matthew J. Fader, Chair

Matthew Barrett

Hon. Bibi M. Berry

Hon. Debra J. Burch

Hon. Yolanda L. Curtin

Hon. Heather S. DeWees

Nancy Faulkner

Maria Fields

Hon. Fred S. Hecker

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Hon. Stacy A. Mayer

Hon. John P. Morrissey

Hon. Harris P. Murphy

Kara Pollak

Judy Rupp

Rebecca Sloane

Roberta Warnken

Others Present:

Hon. Sharon V. Burrell

Lou Gieszl

Warren Hedges

Sarah Kaplan

Amanda Miller

Kelley O'Connor

Suzanne Pelz

Sharon Reed

Hon. Richard J. Sandy

Chris Sharpes

Gillian Tonkin

Hon. William V. Tucker

William Vormelker

Unique Wright

1. Welcome – Hon. Matthew J. Fader

Chief Justice Fader called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of the January 29, 2025 meeting.

Chief Justice Fader noted a change to page 6 of the previous meeting minutes. The minutes should be updated to indicate that the workgroup “recommended” the IDEAL approach, instead of “produced.” No additional comments were made on the previous meeting’s minutes. Justice Fader requested a motion for approval of the revised minutes. The motion was made, and all present were in favor.

3. Executive Committee Updates

- **Chief Justice Matthew J. Fader, Supreme Court of Maryland:**

Justice Fader reported that the Supreme Court of Maryland recently welcomed over 100 new lawyers to the bar. He also noted that Maryland will be one of seven states adopting the NextGen bar exam. The February 2026 administration will be the final exam under the current format, with related rule changes forthcoming to support the transition. He further noted that the Court moved the internal deadline for issuing opinions from August 31 to July 31, accelerating the opinion circulation process. This change updates the informal practice established under former Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera.

Justice Fader added that over 350 participants attended the first statewide Behavioral Health Summit. Each jurisdiction sent representatives, and many left with concrete ideas for improving the criminal justice system’s response to individuals with mental health needs. He expressed optimism about continued collaboration and progress in this area.

- **Chief Judge E. Greg Wells, Appellate Court of Maryland:**

Justice Fader noted that Chief Judge Wells was absent because the Appellate Court was holding a conference that day.

- **Ms. Rupp – Administrative Office of the Courts:**

Ms. Rupp reported the launch of the redesigned Data Dashboard on the Maryland Courts website. The updated dashboard offers enhanced drill-down capabilities, improved categorization of District Court case types, and downloadable data files. It provides an interactive compilation of caseload and performance metrics for both trial and appellate courts; including filings, dispositions, clearance rates, active caseloads, and case processing performance indicators.

An update was provided on the upcoming MDEC system upgrade to Enterprise Justice 2024. Key new features include pinned task queues, task assignment favorites, shortcut icons, batch rescheduling of hearings, form merge enhancements, Odyssey-based e-service, the ability to shield individual charges, attorney conflict checks, and remote hearing attendance notes. The system is currently in round 1 testing with Judicial Information Systems (JIS) and selected court users. Round 1 is scheduled to complete in early July, with full testing

wrapping up by the end of July. Following evaluation, the Judiciary will meet with Tyler Technologies to finalize an implementation timeline. The goal is to ensure a seamless transition from the current system.

Ms. Rupp also discussed a rule change advanced by the Office of Information and Privacy Policy regarding protected individuals in cases. The Wilkinson Act, which applies to executive branch agencies and local political subdivisions, does not extend to the Judiciary or to case records. Clarification on this issue is anticipated, and Ms. Rupp expressed hope that the matter will be taken up by the Supreme Court for further review.

Finally, an update was shared on the development of an artificial intelligence (AI) evidence clinic pilot program. This initiative aims to assist courts by providing expert testimony concerning the authenticity of electronic evidence that may have been altered using AI. The program will prioritize civil cases involving unrepresented litigants or those lacking access to expert support. Implementation planning is underway, with the intent to provide judges with resources when questions regarding AI-generated or manipulated evidence arise.

- **Chief Judge John P. Morrissey, District Court of Maryland:**

Chief Judge John P. Morrissey reported that the annual legislative implementation meeting is scheduled to take place this week, hosted by the District Court Administrative Services Office in collaboration with the Government Relations and Public Affairs Division of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Judge Morrissey also announced that the Maryland Online Resolution (MDOR) system will soon be piloted for payable traffic cases, with a full pilot rollout expected by late summer or early fall. District Court Operations is working closely with the AOC to coordinate training and logistics for the upcoming launch.

Judge Morrissey noted that administrative clerks, administrative judges, and administrative commissioners participated in the Behavioral Health Summit and have begun to implement several strategies and insights drawn from that event. He also reported on facilities updates, stating that staff in Baltimore City will be relocating to the newly constructed courthouse in October over the three-day weekend.

Turning to outreach and public education, Judge Morrissey highlighted the recent expansion of the Schools in the Courts program, which has hosted events in Anne Arundel County, Prince George's County, and Baltimore City. He also praised the Courting Art program for its continued success in showcasing high school artists. The program, in partnership with the Arts Everyday foundation, hosts a competition each year. A recent winner was accepted to the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Judge Morrissey shared that multiple Adult Drug Court graduations have taken place in recent weeks, underscoring the continued impact of these programs. He also spoke about his participation in the 25th Annual Forum on the Judiciary with Anne Arundel Community College's law program. As a result of that engagement, Judge Morrissey will be inviting a student from the forum to shadow or intern with him, continuing a tradition of mentoring emerging legal professionals.

Additionally, Judge Morrissey reported that a reentry simulation was recently conducted at the Maryland Judicial Center in partnership with the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy.

He concluded his remarks by acknowledging that a memorial service for Judge James B. Sarsfield was taking place concurrently with the Judicial Council meeting.

- **Hon. Fred S. Hecker, Chair, Conference of Circuit Judges:**

Judge Fred S. Hecker reported that work continues with Judge Laura S. Ripken on the expanded voir dire project. The focus remains on increasing the survey response rate, and progress has been positive. Administrative judges have been reaching out to judges and attorneys to encourage participation. He also discussed the recently passed Senate Bill 453, which requires all counties to establish outpatient treatment programs by July 1, 2026. To support implementation, Judge Hecker is forming an advisory board comprising approximately five to six circuit court judges from both large and small counties, ensuring geographic representation across the state. This advisory board will meet monthly and collaborate with representatives from the Maryland Department of Health to develop recommendations for court procedures concerning assisted outpatient treatment cases.

4. Committee Updates

- a. **Equal Justice Committee – *Hon. Sharon V. Burrell***

Judge Sharon V. Burrell, joined by Lou Gieszl, staff for the Equal Justice Committee, reported on the committee's ongoing efforts to promote fairness and equity within the Judiciary.

She began by highlighting the work of the Community Outreach Subcommittee, chaired by Judge Pamela J. Brown, which continues to lead public forums across the state. Judge Burrell noted that 12 forums have been held to date, including recent events on bail review in Harford County and the Upper Shore, family law in Montgomery County, and mental health and treatment courts in Anne Arundel and Allegany Counties. She reported that additional forums are planned for Fall 2025 in Baltimore City and Southern Maryland, and that outreach with local NAACP branches and other organizations is also under consideration.

Judge Burrell then described the work of the Community Liaisons Workgroup. She explained that the workgroup surveyed courts to assess interest in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) liaisons and reported that the AOC's Access to Justice Department funded DEI positions in Baltimore and Montgomery Counties. She highlighted that the DEI liaison at the Circuit Court for Baltimore County played a key role in launching the court's new Access to Justice Resource Center, which officially opened on May 9, 2025. Judge Burrell added that expansion of DEI and access to justice roles to other jurisdictions is currently under review.

Next, Judge Burrell reported on updates from the Operations Subcommittee, which shared results of the 2023 Employee Experiences Survey. Jurisdictional reports were finalized and distributed in 2024, and she noted that leadership meetings were held from August to November to review the findings. She shared that courts raised several recurring questions during these meetings, including concerns about how data was broken down (i.e., distinguishing between state-funded and county-funded staff), the ability to receive jurisdiction specific feedback, and the confidentiality of survey responses. Many courts emphasized the importance of having disaggregated data and transparent feedback to help guide their internal efforts.

Turning to the Public Perceptions Survey, Judge Burrell reported that although this is a continuous effort, analysis had been temporarily paused due to staffing shortages. She informed the group that a new researcher with Research and Analysis was hired in March 2025, and that data analysis is expected to resume later this year. She reported that as of April 24, 2025, 301 responses had been started, with 21% completed by District Court users, 15% completed by circuit court users, and 64% classified as incomplete.

Judge Burrell also outlined the committee's strategic goals related to the Public Perceptions Survey. She reported that the committee plans to increase response rates through outreach strategies such as QR codes, posters, court forms, and word-of-mouth. She added that new tools like Power BI and improved analysis methods will be used to enhance data visualization and reporting. Survey findings will be shared both Judiciary-wide and at the local level. Results will be used to inform future training efforts, revise policies, and improve procedures.

Judge Burrell reported that the Sentencing Subcommittee continues to review disparities in sentencing across Maryland. The subcommittee's second interim report — based on internal Judiciary data, external studies, and comparisons with national practices — was approved by the Equal Justice Committee and submitted to Chief Justice Fader for review in 2024.

During the discussion, Chief Justice Fader inquired about the 64% incomplete survey statistic. Subsequent to the Judicial Council meeting, Mr. Gieszl provided clarifying information that the high number of incomplete responses is largely due to participants exiting the survey at the demographic section and noted that, depending on the completeness of each submission, some data may still be included in analysis.

Chief Justice Fader concluded by commending the committee for its commitment to improving access to justice and acknowledged its thoughtful, collaborative work.

b. Juvenile Law Committee – *Hon. William V. Tucker*

Judge William V. Tucker, Chair of the Juvenile Law Committee, provided a comprehensive report on the committee's current initiatives, structure, and future priorities. He began by reaffirming the committee's core mission: to offer guidance on policies, rules, and legislation affecting juvenile law, including both juvenile justice and child welfare matters.

Reporting on the status of the Truancy Court Workgroup, Judge Tucker noted that this group operates jointly with the Specialty Courts and Dockets Committee and focuses on truancy problem-solving courts. The workgroup is currently on hiatus, and while there are no immediate plans to reactivate it, its future may be influenced by forthcoming legislative or fiscal developments.

Turning to the Foster Care Court Improvement Program Subcommittee (FCCIP), Judge Tucker reported that the subcommittee, now chaired by Judge Julie A. Minner, is engaged in a range of child welfare initiatives, including those related to Child in Need of Assistance (CINA), Guardianship/Termination of Parental Rights (TPR), and adoption. FCCIP operates in alignment with the Federal Court Improvement Program and carries out its work through four active workgroups.

Judge Tucker first described the Child Welfare Education Workgroup, which leads judicial training efforts and is best known for planning the annual Child Abuse, Neglect, and Delinquency Options (CANDO) training. The Reporting, Analysis, and Data (RAD) Workgroup plays a vital role in ensuring the accuracy of child welfare performance reports required for federal funding compliance. One of this workgroup's recent highlights was the RAD Child Welfare Data Symposium held on March 11, 2025. The event focused on data quality and was attended by juvenile court staff, FCCIP grantees, and a broad range of child welfare stakeholders. Judge Tucker shared that regional site visits are planned for fall 2025 to further support data quality efforts.

Judge Tucker then detailed the Representation Resources Workgroup, which is working to improve the quality of legal representation for all parties involved in child welfare proceedings. The group is exploring ways to use federal Title IV-E funds to support pre-petition representation and other legal resources for families at risk of court intervention. He also highlighted the Outreach and Programming Workgroup, which is focused on promoting awareness and accessibility of court programs that aim to improve permanency outcomes. Among its key projects is a pilot initiative to develop court educational liaison roles, which would help courts better assess and respond to the educational needs of children in care. This workgroup is also

organizing the Child Welfare Alternative Dispute Resolution Training, which will take place on June 30, 2025, and is intended to expand the availability of trained mediators in CINA and TPR matters.

In addition to these efforts, Judge Tucker explained that FCCIP is preparing for Maryland's participation in Round 4 of the federal Child and Family Services Review, a process that will be led by the state agency in close coordination with the U.S. Children's Bureau. As part of its ongoing commitment to continuous quality improvement, FCCIP will conduct jurisdictional site visits throughout 2025 and 2026. These visits aim to identify promising practices, collect performance data, and provide technical assistance where needed. Judge Tucker also reported that FCCIP is exploring ways to refine the data logic used in reporting and to expand data collection, particularly in permanency planning and TPR cases.

He further noted that permanency planning liaisons are now in place in seven of the state's eight judicial circuits. These liaisons support courts by identifying systemic barriers to timely permanency, monitoring for data quality, ensuring statutory compliance, and serving as a bridge between FCCIP and the local courts.

Turning next to the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee, chaired by Judge Lara C. Weathersbee, Judge Tucker reported that one of its current priorities is the development of a juvenile justice dashboard. In collaboration with AOC's Research and Analysis staff, the subcommittee is working to define the scope and elements of the dashboard, with the goal of equipping the juvenile bench with accessible, anonymized data for use in decision-making. Judge Tucker also described the committee's early-stage collaboration with the Hon. Marina L. Sabett and Maxine Curtis; Senior Program Manager, Office of Problem Solving Courts, on a mental health project aimed at identifying service gaps for youth. He explained that the committee has been advised that the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) is conducting a similar gap analysis, and that a meeting is being planned to discuss coordination and possible joint efforts.

Judge Tucker emphasized the Juvenile Law Committee's ongoing role in legislative monitoring. Throughout the legislative session, the committee meets weekly to review proposed bills. After the session concludes, it works with its subcommittees and staff to implement any newly enacted legislation. Judge Tucker noted that the committee is not recommending Judiciary sponsored truancy court legislation at this time. The committee will await the Judiciary's report mandated by HB 1442, consider the fiscal landscape and its effect on the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, and then assess whether legislative action should be recommended.

Judge Tucker also reported that the committee maintains strong working relationships with both the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the DJS. To support continued collaboration, the committee is extending invitations to the secretaries of both departments to meet informally with the committee and its subcommittees during the year to discuss areas of shared concern. Additionally, Judge Tucker noted

that the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee is planning a series of recurring online lunchtime meetings with selected DJS personnel to facilitate regular updates and in-depth discussions on juvenile justice topics.

Judge Tucker also highlighted the committee's continued leadership in judicial education and stakeholder training. Planning is underway for CANDO 2025, scheduled for October 27 to 29, which will mark the 25th anniversary of the event. This year's training will include multidisciplinary sessions, with at least one day of joint participation by the bench and other stakeholders. Training sessions will include "Nuts and Bolts" overviews of delinquency, CINA, and TPR; legislative and case law updates; and additional topical sessions. The Child Welfare Education Workgroup is leading planning on general child welfare content, while the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee is developing juvenile justice-related sessions.

In response to recent implementation concerns regarding the Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) and the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), Judge Tucker reported that Judges Charles M. Blomquist and Stephanie P. Porter are leading efforts to develop relevant trainings. An overview of both compacts will be included in the CANDO conference, and a longer, stand-alone training focused solely on ICJ will be offered through Judicial Education at a future date. Additional training on CINA and TPR matters is also under development. Judge Tucker explained that the Judicial College and the Child Welfare Education Workgroup are planning a full-day program split into morning and afternoon sessions, though the date has not yet been confirmed.

Judge Tucker noted that the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee has resumed its work on revising juvenile justice forms, following a temporary pause necessitated by major statutory and rule changes. The updated forms will address various stages of delinquency, citations, competency proceedings, and juvenile peace orders. The subcommittee is also working to improve communication within the juvenile court bench. Judge Tucker shared that efforts are underway, in partnership with JIS, to develop a dedicated Teams channel or comparable platform for judges and magistrates handling juvenile matters. The goal is to streamline information sharing and strengthen internal coordination.

During the meeting, several members posed questions specifically about the juvenile justice dashboard. Judge Hecker asked what types of information would be included. Ms. Kaplan explained that Baltimore City is a key driver of the initiative, and that the dashboard is intended to provide statistical data related to waivers, transfer cases, and court delays, without naming individual children. She clarified that the data would be drawn from current case records, and that privacy would be maintained. Justice Fader asked whether the dashboard would reflect historical trends and whether it would be made public. Ms. Kaplan responded that those matters are still under discussion. Judge Morrissey confirmed that the dashboard would be fed from MDEC data but would require multiple levels of transformation before becoming usable. He acknowledged that developing a publicly accessible version of the dashboard remains

a challenge, though progress is being made. Justice Fader emphasized the importance of making accurate juvenile justice data available.

In conclusion, Judge Tucker summarized the committee's immediate next steps. Development of the juvenile dashboard will continue, with further coordination among AOC and local stakeholders. The committee will proceed with planning a collaborative meeting with DJS, Judge Sabett, and Ms. Curtis to align mental health and gap analysis efforts. It will finalize the CANDO 2025 training agenda and continue developing the ICJ/ICPC and CINA and TPR training programs. The committee will monitor developments related to HB 1442 and determine whether future legislation is needed. Finalization of juvenile justice forms and the launch of the internal Teams communication platform are also on the horizon. FCCIP will begin conducting jurisdictional site visits and continue preparing for the upcoming federal review. Finally, the committee will maintain regular engagement with DHS and DJS, including convening at least one joint meeting with agency leadership and the committee's membership to address common goals.

c. Legislative Committee – *Hon. Stacy A. Mayer*

Judge Stacy A. Mayer, Chair of the Legislative Committee, presented an overview of the committee's work during the 2025 legislative session. She was joined by the vice-chair, Judge Richard J. Sandy. Judge Mayer began by acknowledging the dedication of the committee members, many of whom also serve on the Judicial Council. She highlighted the leadership of Judge Michael E. Malone, who chairs the Civil Law Subcommittee, and Judge Robin D. Gill Bright, who continues to chair the Criminal Law Subcommittee.

In discussing the committee's role, Judge Mayer reiterated the Judiciary's commitment to remaining a neutral arbiter. She stressed that while the General Assembly is responsible for policy decisions, the Judiciary must protect its constitutional authority and operational integrity. The committee, she noted, does not weigh in on the policy merits of legislation but may engage with bills that affect core judicial functions or would have a substantial operational impact.

The Judiciary's involvement is grounded in its obligation to educate lawmakers based on judicial expertise and practical experience. Judge Mayer explained that the committee recently updated how it communicates positions on legislation. A new structure has been implemented to ensure clarity, objectivity, and neutrality. The Judiciary may support a bill if it enhances judicial operations, oppose a bill if it infringes upon core functions or undermines the justice system, oppose specific provisions while not opposing the bill in its entirety, or submit informational comments based on judicial insight without taking a position.

All communications are now carefully tailored to reflect these categories, avoiding hyperbolic language and maintaining a fact-based approach. As an example of this neutral approach, Judge Mayer described an informational comment submitted on

House Bill 187 regarding criminal benefits exploitation. While the Judiciary took no position on the policy goals of the bill, it offered clarification on an anti-merger provision. Specifically, the Judiciary noted that the language referencing “conviction” rather than “sentence” could be misleading, since merger in criminal law typically pertains to sentencing, not to whether a conviction is recorded. Judge Mayer shared some statistics from the session, noting that the committee reviewed over 2,600 bills, conducted in-depth analysis of 764 bills, took formal positions on 198, and completed 628 fiscal worksheets.

Judge Mayer thanked Ms. Rupp and Chief Judge Morrissey and their staff for their substantial efforts in managing the fiscal component of the committee’s work. She then offered a detailed summary of key legislation that passed during the 2025 session. Senate Bill 621 mandates that law enforcement agencies that provide courthouse security shall report courthouse security data to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Maryland by September 30, 2025. House Bill 786 authorizes the Appellate Court of Maryland to hold sessions at educational institutions, fostering civic education across the state. House Bill 787 and Senate Bill 622 repeal the requirement for the State Reporter to secure a copyright for published court opinions. House Bill 788 proposes a constitutional amendment to address vacancies on the Commission on Judicial Disabilities by allowing temporary appointments or term extensions when needed. If approved by voters in 2026, the amendment will take effect in December of that year.

Judge Mayer also addressed Senate Bill 655, which proposed establishing an Artificial Intelligence Evidence Clinic. Although vetoed, the Judiciary plans to move forward with a pilot program using existing authority. Justice Fader explained that the veto occurred because the Governor’s office concluded the Judiciary already had the capacity to implement the program without legislation. Justice Fader stated that the Judiciary agrees that it has that capacity. Additional legislation of note includes House Bill 1200 and Senate Bill 502, which expand local property tax credits to judicial and correctional officers. House Bill 1440 contains new parental accommodation provisions and requires courthouses constructed or substantially renovated after October 1, 2025, to include a lactation room meeting certain requirements. The bill also authorizes excusal from jury duty of breastfeeding mothers and primary caregivers of young children. Additionally, the bill requires the Judiciary to collect and report jury excusal data annually.

House Bill 1222, known as the Maryland Values Act, limits federal immigration enforcement access at sensitive locations, including courthouses, without a valid warrant or exigent circumstances. The Attorney General will issue guidance, and all relevant entities must comply by October 1, 2025. The bill also addresses data privacy and redisclosure limitations for state-held records. Judge Mayer also reviewed several civil law bills that passed, including House Bill 315, which establishes a task force to examine fiduciary adjudication in Maryland. The task force, which includes representation from both circuit and orphans’ courts, will report its findings by January 1, 2026.

House Bill 1378 makes changes to the Maryland Child Victims Act of 2023 by revising liability limits and reporting requirements and grants the Supreme Court of Maryland rulemaking authority to support implementation. The Judiciary also engaged with important criminal law and expungement legislation. House Bill 432, the Expungement Reform Act of 2025, expands expungement eligibility and alters waiting periods, including new rules for Maryland Judiciary Case Search visibility. These provisions take effect beginning July 1, 2025, with some elements effective January 31, 2026.

Landlord-tenant laws were the focus of several new bills. Senate Bill 46 requires hearings for wrongful detainer complaints to occur within 10 business days and updates service requirements. House Bill 767, the Tenant Possessions Recovery Act, outlines detailed notice procedures and creates civil remedies for tenants.

Judge Mayer next highlighted key legislation in the areas of juvenile and family law. House Bill 1191 and Senate Bill 548 codify the factors courts must consider when determining the best interests of the child in custody cases and require that those findings be articulated on the record. House Bill 533 and Senate Bill 273 incorporate military protection orders into the peace and protective order process. House Bill 243 streamlines adult adoption procedures by removing outdated service and consent requirements. House Bill 681 exempts certain low-income obligors from driver's license suspension for child support nonpayment, provided they meet eligibility requirements. House Bill 1442 requires the Judiciary to provide an annual report on the number and outcomes of truancy reduction programs.

Several criminal law bills also passed with major implications. House Bill 853, the Maryland Second Look Act, expands the Juvenile Restoration Act and allows for sentence modification after 20 years for individuals convicted between ages 18 and 24. House Bill 1125 expands the responsibilities of the Workgroup on Home Detention Monitoring and includes Judiciary participation through Judge James Green. House Bill 179 and Senate Bill 11 create the felony offense of organized retail theft and establish sentencing guidelines. House Bill 293 and Senate Bill 274 revise procedures for allowing child victims to testify via closed-circuit television to mitigate undue emotional distress. House Bill 413 adjusts penalties for cannabis-related trafficking and modifies firearms laws. House Bill 634 and Senate Bill 295 create the Income Tax Reconciliation Program, helping justice-involved individuals manage unpaid taxes through installment plans and penalty waivers. House Bill 634 and Senate Bill 295 will require courts to inform defendants sentenced to a term of imprisonment of at least 6 months but not more than 10 years about the Income Tax Reconciliation program. This legislation prompted the Forms Subcommittee to consider creating a mandatory notice form that informs parties of these new legal obligations.

Judge Mayer also noted legislation of significance that did not pass, including House Bill 778 and Senate Bill 630, which proposed eliminating contested judicial elections for circuit court judges in favor of an appointment-retention model. Another measure

that did not pass, House Bill 864 and Senate Bill 620, would have added an additional judgeship in St. Mary's County.

Judge Mayer noted that a final report will be circulated by the end of the week, and she encouraged early submission of legislative proposals for the 2026 session. In response to a question from Judge Yolanda L. Curtin about how bills are brought to the committee's attention, Judge Mayer explained that the committee relies on a structured internal process. Staff counsel flags bills of interest, and a running chart of hearings is maintained to ensure timely responses.

Justice Fader concluded the discussion by thanking the committee for its tireless efforts throughout the session. He commented on the courtroom security legislation, noting that while the original proposal included minimum staffing standards for courtroom security, the final bill included only a reporting requirement. He emphasized that the Judiciary still plans to pursue the staffing standard in future sessions. Judge Wilson, chair of the Court Security Subcommittee, is currently developing a reporting template and coordinating with sheriffs' offices statewide to ensure a consistent approach.

5. For the Good of the Order

No additional matters were raised by the members, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.