

Date of Hearing: May 8, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2625 (Bryan) – As Amended April 11, 2024

Policy Committee:	Public Safety	Vote:	8 - 0
	Judiciary		11 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires each county to develop a court reminder program that allows a superior court, county defense agency or contractor, pretrial services provider, or a community-based organization to send a text message to notify a defendant of scheduled court appearances.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Likely reimbursable costs (local funds, General Fund) of an unknown amount to the counties to develop and operate court reminder programs. Counties will likely incur significant one-time costs to develop the IT systems needed to provide court reminders, possibly in the millions of dollars or more statewide, plus ongoing annual costs to maintain the systems and provide reminders. Some counties already operate court notification systems; if they can alter these existing systems to comply with the requirements of this bill, costs to those counties may be lower. However, for counties that must establish a new system, costs will likely be significant. General Fund costs will depend on whether the duties imposed by this bill constitute a reimbursable state mandate, as determined by the Commission on State Mandates.

- 2) Costs (Trial Court Trust Fund, General Fund) to the courts of an unknown but potentially significant amount to work with the counties to establish and implement court reminder systems. In the long term, possible future cost savings to the courts to the extent these systems, once established, result in fewer continuations for failure to appear. The Governor’s 2024-25 budget proposes \$83.1 million ongoing from the General Fund to backfill declining revenue to the Trial Court Trust Fund.

According to the Legislative Analyst’s Office, the General Fund faces a structural deficit in the tens of billions of dollars over the next several fiscal years.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Court notification systems are a powerful and cost-effective tool to help those in the pretrial system return to court. Unfortunately, far too many Californians unintentionally miss their court dates. Over the past four years, anywhere from 17-39% of cases had a bench warrant issued due solely to a missed court appearance. Having a missed court

appearances can have serious consequences for people and the entire community.

- 2) **Background.** Research shows that notification systems are highly effective at improving appearance rates at court proceedings. If a defendant fails to appear in court as required, they may be subject to fines or other significant penalties, including, in some cases, additional criminal charges. This bill requires each county to develop and implement a court reminder system. The bill includes provisions to govern the collection and use of defendants' personal information, and specifies personal information must not be used by law enforcement agencies or the courts for any purpose other than for court date reminders.
- 3) **Related Legislation.** SB 255 (Umberg) requires Judicial Council to develop and make available to each superior court a program that allows the court to send a text message to notify a defendant of scheduled court appearances. SB 255 was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee's suspense file.

SB 850 (Umberg) is identical to SB 255. SB 850 was also held on the Senate Appropriations Committee's suspense file.

Analysis Prepared by: Annika Carlson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081