

The House Committee on Judiciary offers the following substitute to SB 203:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 15 and Chapter 12 of Title 17 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating respectively to courts and legal defense for indigents, so as to clarify and change
3 provisions relating to fees and collection of fees for indigent defense services; to provide that
4 local victim assistance funds collected by the courts shall be paid directly to the county
5 governing authority or the district attorney; to provide for certain reports; to provide that the
6 Criminal Justice Coordinating Council shall quarterly prepare and publish a report of all
7 courts that have not filed certain reports; to change certain provisions relating to the
8 procedure for reporting and remittance of certain funds collected by any clerk of court or
9 other officer or agent of any court; to change certain provisions relating to the application
10 fees for free legal services and remittance of funds; to clarify remittance of the \$50.00
11 application fee to certain entities; to provide for an additional filing fee for notary public
12 applications; to change provisions relating to an additional filing fee on civil actions in the
13 probate courts; to change provisions relating to the system of reporting and accounting
14 relating to the Georgia Superior Court Clerks Cooperative Authority; to authorize certain
15 inquiries and audits; to authorize the recovery of attorney's fees and costs under certain
16 circumstances; to provide for definitions; to provide for clarity regarding which entities may
17 be entitled to collect attorney's fees and the mechanism for such collection; to correct a
18 cross-reference relating to circuit public defender office's contracts with local governments;
19 to provide for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for
20 other purposes.

21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

22 **SECTION 1.**

23 Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to courts, is amended by striking
24 Code Section 15-21-132, relating to assessment and collection of local victim assistance
25 funds, and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

1 "15-21-132.

2 (a) The sums provided for in Code Section 15-21-131 shall be assessed and collected by
3 the court officer charged with the duty of collecting moneys arising from fines and shall
4 be paid over to the Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority by the end of the
5 month after the collection. The net proceeds shall be distributed by such authority as
6 follows monthly:

7 (1) If the county where the fine was imposed operates or participates in any victim
8 assistance program certified by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, ~~then the~~
9 ~~moneys shall be paid over~~ to the governing authority of the county for disbursement to
10 those victim assistance programs; or

11 (2) If the county where the fine was imposed does not operate or participate in any
12 victim assistance program certified by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, ~~then~~
13 ~~the moneys shall be paid over~~ to the district attorney of the judicial circuit in which the
14 county is located for the purpose of defraying the costs of victim assistance activities
15 carried out by the district attorney's office. Such funds shall be paid over in the same
16 manner as other county funds paid for operations of the district attorney's office and shall
17 be in addition to rather than in lieu of any other such funds.

18 All such funds shall be paid to the recipients by the last day of the month in which the
19 funds are received; provided, however, that the governing authority of the county shall be
20 authorized to hold as reserve funds an amount not to exceed 5 percent of the funds received
21 by the governing authority in the preceding calendar year.

22 (b) ~~The Georgia Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority~~ The court officer charged
23 with the duty of collecting moneys arising from fines as provided for in Code Section
24 15-21-131 shall receive and distribute the funds collected pursuant to this Code section to
25 the county governing ~~authorities~~ authority or district attorney, as appropriate, and shall
26 submit a monthly report of the collection and distribution of such funds to the Georgia
27 Superior Court Clerks' Cooperative Authority, and the Georgia Superior Court Clerks'
28 Cooperative Authority shall submit a financial report to the Criminal Justice Coordinating
29 Council each month stating the amount collected and the amount disbursed ~~to each county~~
30 ~~governing authority~~ no later than the last day of the month following the month in which
31 the funds were collected.

32 (c) The county governing authority receiving funds shall submit a financial report to the
33 Criminal Justice Coordinating Council semiannually stating the recipients that directly
34 received funds during such reporting period no later than the last day of the month
35 following the reporting period in which the funds were collected in order to allow
36 coordination of local, state, and federal funding sources for similar services. The Criminal
37 Justice Coordinating Council shall report annually to the General Assembly the county

1 governing authorities that failed to submit semiannual reports during the previous calendar
2 year.

3 (d) All recipients of funds pursuant to this Code section, except county governing
4 authorities, shall submit an annual report to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.
5 Such report shall include, but not be limited to, the total amount of funds received ~~from~~
6 ~~each county governing authority pursuant to this Code section~~, the purposes for which the
7 funds were expended, and the total number of victims served in each county for which the
8 funds were received. A copy of each recipient's annual report shall also be submitted to
9 each county governing authority from which funds were received pursuant to this Code
10 section.

11 (e) The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council shall promulgate rules governing the
12 certification of victim assistance programs. The rules shall provide for the certification of
13 programs which are designed to provide substantial assistance to victims of crime in
14 understanding and dealing with the criminal justice system as it relates to the crimes
15 committed against them. It is the intention of the General Assembly that certification shall
16 be liberally granted so as to encourage local innovations in the development of victim
17 assistance programs.

18 (f) The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council shall promulgate rules governing the
19 revocation of certification of victim assistance programs. Such rules shall provide for the
20 decertification of programs previously certified by the Criminal Justice Coordinating
21 Council that are no longer in compliance with the rules promulgated by the Criminal
22 Justice Coordinating Council pursuant to this Code section.

23 (g) Moneys arising from fines imposed pursuant to Code Section 15-21-131 shall not be
24 paid to any victim assistance program that has not been certified by the Criminal Justice
25 Coordinating Council or to any program that has been decertified by such council.

26 (h) Each calendar quarter, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council shall prepare and
27 publish, by document and posting on its website, a report that shall list each court which
28 has not filed the reports required by subsection (b) of this Code section."

29 SECTION 2.

30 Said title is further amended by striking Code Section 15-21A-4, relating to the procedure
31 for reporting and remittance of certain funds collected by any clerk of court or other officer
32 or agent of any court, and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

33 "15-21A-4.

34 (a)(1) Each clerk of any court or any other officer or agent of any court receiving any
35 funds ~~subject to~~ required to be remitted to the authority under this chapter on or after July
36 1, 2004, shall remit all such funds to the authority by the end of the month following the

1 month in which such funds are received. Each clerk of any court or other officer or agent
 2 of any court receiving any funds required to be reported to the authority by this chapter
 3 or the rules and regulations of the authority promulgated in accordance with Code Section
 4 15-21A-7 shall report such funds to the authority no later than 60 days after the last day
 5 of the month in which such funds are received.

6 (2) The chief judge of superior court for each county shall have the authority to require
 7 compliance with ~~paragraph (1) of this subsection by~~ this chapter and with the rules and
 8 regulations of the authority promulgated by the authority in accordance with Code
 9 Section 15-21A-7 by any clerk, officer, or agent of any court within the county. If any
 10 court is more than 60 days delinquent or is habitually delinquent in remitting any funds
 11 or reports required under this ~~Code section or Code Section 15-21A-6,~~ chapter or by the
 12 rules and regulations of the authority promulgated in accordance with Code Section
 13 15-21A-7, the authority shall notify the chief judge of superior court of the county in
 14 which the court is located.

15 (b) The authority shall prescribe uniform procedures and forms for the reporting and
 16 remittance of all funds subject to ~~Code Section 15-21A-3~~ this chapter or the rules and
 17 regulations of the authority promulgated in accordance with Code Section 15-21A-7; and
 18 all clerks or other officers or agents remitting or reporting such funds shall use the
 19 prescribed procedures and forms in reporting and remitting funds to the authority.

20 (c) The authority shall prescribe uniform rules, procedures, and forms relative to the partial
 21 or installment collection and remittance of funds subject to ~~Code Section 15-21A-3~~
 22 reporting or remittance to the authority under this chapter or rules and regulations
 23 promulgated by the authority in accordance with Code Section 15-21A-7. Any funds held
 24 by any court or unit of local government on July 1, 2004, consisting of previously collected
 25 partial or installment payments shall be subject to the rules, procedures, and forms so
 26 prescribed and shall be remitted to the authority to the extent provided for in such rules and
 27 procedures. Funds collected that are partial or installment payments of costs, fees, and
 28 surcharges that are required by this chapter to be remitted to the authority shall be remitted
 29 to the authority by the end of the month following the month in which they were collected;
 30 provided, however, that the authority is authorized to provide by rules and regulations for
 31 a longer period of time for remitting such funds not to exceed six months.

32 (d) The authority shall remit all funds collected to the designated receiving entities or
 33 general fund of the state treasury within 60 days of receiving such funds."

1 imposed if the payment of the fee is waived by the court. The court shall waive the fee if
 2 it finds that the applicant is unable to pay the fee or that hardship will result if the fee is
 3 charged.

4 ~~(c)~~(d) Each clerk of court, each indigent defense program, or any other officer or agent of
 5 any court receiving any funds subject to this Code section shall collect the additional fees
 6 provided in this Code section and shall pay such moneys over to the authority by the last
 7 day of the month after the month of collection, to be deposited by the authority into the
 8 general fund of the state treasury.

9 ~~(d)~~(e) It is the intent of the General Assembly that all funds derived under this Code
 10 section shall be made available through the general appropriations process and may be
 11 appropriated for purposes of funding indigent defense.

12 ~~(e)~~(f) A public entity other than an entity providing legal defense services under Chapter
 13 12 of Title 17 may charge, in addition to any other fee or surcharge authorized by law, a
 14 \$50.00 application fee unless waived by the court for inability to pay or hardship. Any such
 15 fee shall be retained by the entity providing the services or used as otherwise provided by
 16 law and shall not be subject to payment to the authority or deposit into the state treasury.

17 (g) For the purposes of this Code section, a county or municipality that provides indigent
 18 defense services or that contracts with a circuit public defender office for the provision of
 19 indigent defense services in courts other than the superior and juvenile court is deemed to
 20 be the entity providing the legal defense services and is entitled to impose and collect the
 21 application fee authorized by subsection (f) of this Code section."

22 SECTION 4.

23 Said title is further amended by striking subsection (b) of Code Section 15-21A-7, relating
 24 to the definition of court and the system for reporting and accounting, and inserting in lieu
 25 thereof the following:

26 "(b) The authority shall ~~develop~~ promulgate rules and regulations for the administration
 27 of this chapter. Such rules and regulations shall include but not be limited to a reporting
 28 and accounting system for all court fines and fees and all surcharges on and deductions
 29 from any court fines and fees that are authorized to be collected or disbursed in any court.
 30 The authority shall develop a system that employs controls necessary to determine the
 31 accuracy of the fine and fee collections and disbursement by each clerk of court or other
 32 officer or agent of any court receiving any fines and fees. No later than 60 days after the
 33 end of the last day of each month, each such clerk of court and, if there is no clerk of court,
 34 any court officer, judge, or other agent of the court shall report to the authority on a
 35 reporting system prescribed by the authority. Any entity doing business with ~~such clerk or~~
 36 ~~agents~~ any court and all agencies and instrumentalities of the state shall ~~cooperate in~~

1 ~~providing on a timely basis~~ provide any information or data requested by the authority in
 2 a format prescribed by the authority by rule or regulation. The authority is authorized to
 3 make inquiries to clerks of court, court officers, judges, or agents of any court and agencies
 4 or instrumentalities of the state as well as any other parties for the purpose of determining
 5 the accuracy of any fines and fees collected or disbursed by a court and is authorized where
 6 it determines appropriate to conduct audits of any parties to assist in ensuring the accuracy
 7 of the system developed by the authority."

8 **SECTION 5.**

9 Chapter 12 of Title 17 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to legal defense
 10 for indigents, is amended by striking subsection (d) of Code Section 17-12-23, relating to
 11 contracts with local governments, and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

12 "(d) A city; or county; ~~or consolidated government~~ may contract with the circuit public
 13 defender office for the provision of criminal defense for indigent persons accused of
 14 violating city; or county; ~~or consolidated government~~ ordinances or state laws. If a city; or
 15 county; ~~or consolidated government~~ does not contract with the circuit public defender
 16 office, the city; or county; ~~or consolidated government~~ shall be subject to all applicable
 17 standards adopted by the council for representation of indigent persons in this state."

18 **SECTION 6.**

19 Said chapter is further amended by inserting a new Article 2A to the chapter to read as
 20 follows:

21 **"ARTICLE 2A**

22 17-12-50.

23 As used in this article, the term:

24 (1) 'Paid in part' means payment by a county or municipality for a part of the cost of the
 25 provision of indigent defense services pursuant to a contract with a circuit public
 26 defender office as set forth in subsection (d) of Code Section 17-12-23. The term does not
 27 include payment by a county or municipality for office space and other supplies as set
 28 forth in Code Section 17-12-34.

29 (2) 'Public defender' means an attorney employed by a circuit public defender office, an
 30 attorney who is a conflict defender, or any other attorney who is paid from public funds
 31 to represent an indigent person in a criminal case.

1 17-12-51.

2 (a) When a defendant who is represented by a public defender, who is paid in part or in
3 whole by a county, enters a plea of nolo contendere, first offender, or guilty or is otherwise
4 convicted, the court may impose as a condition of probation repayment of all or a portion
5 of the cost for providing legal representation and other expenses of the defense if the
6 payment does not impose a financial hardship upon the defendant or the defendant's
7 dependent or dependents. The defendant shall make the payment through the probation
8 department to the county.

9 (b) When a defendant who is represented by a public defender, who is paid in part or in
10 whole by a municipality, enters a plea of nolo contendere, first offender, or guilty or is
11 otherwise convicted, the court may impose as a condition of probation repayment of all or
12 a portion of the cost for providing legal representation and other expenses of the defense
13 if the payment does not impose a financial hardship upon the defendant or the defendant's
14 dependents or dependents. The defendant shall make the payment through the probation
15 department to the municipality.

16 (c) If a defendant who is represented by a public defender, who is paid for entirely by the
17 state, enters a plea of nolo contendere, first offender, or guilty or is otherwise convicted,
18 the court may impose as a condition of probation repayment of all or a portion of the cost
19 for providing legal representation and other costs of the defense if the payment does not
20 impose a financial hardship upon defendant or the defendant's dependent or dependents.
21 The defendant shall make the payment through the probation department to Georgia Public
22 Defender Standards Council for payment to the general fund of the state treasury. It is the
23 intent of the General Assembly that all funds collected under this subsection shall be made
24 available through the general appropriations process and may be appropriated for purposes
25 of funding indigent defense.

26 (d) In determining whether or not a payment imposed under this Code section imposes a
27 financial hardship upon a defendant or defendant's dependent or dependents and in
28 determining the amount of the payment to impose, the court shall consider the factors set
29 forth in Code Section 17-14-10. The public defender may provide the court with an
30 estimate of the cost for providing to the defendant the legal representation and other
31 expenses of the defense. If requested by the defendant, the court shall hold a hearing to
32 determine the amount to be paid.

33 (e) This Code section shall not apply to a disposition involving a child pursuant to Chapter
34 11 of Title 15, relating to juvenile proceedings.

1 17-12-52.

2 (a) A county or municipality may recover payment or reimbursement from a person who
3 has received legal assistance from a public defender paid in part or in whole by the county
4 or municipality:

5 (1) If the person was not eligible to receive such legal assistance; or

6 (2) If the person has been ordered to pay for the legal representation and other expenses
7 of the defense pursuant to Code Section 17-12-51 and has not paid for the legal services.

8 (b) An action shall be brought within four years after the date on which the legal services
9 were received.

10 (c) In determining the amount of the payment imposed under this Code section, the court
11 shall consider the factors set forth in Code Section 17-14-10. The public defender may
12 provide the court with an estimate of the cost for providing to the defendant the legal
13 representation and other expenses of the defense.

14 (d) This Code section shall not apply to proceedings involving a child pursuant to Chapter
15 11 of Title 15, relating to juvenile proceedings."

16 **SECTION 7.**

17 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2005.

18 **SECTION 8.**

19 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.