

Council Bill 8-2026 Fiscal Analysis

Introduced: January 5, 2026

Fiscal Manager: Owen Kahn

Legislative Intent: This legislation adopts the 2025 Compensation Review Commission's recommendations for the annual compensation for members of the Howard County Council for the term beginning in December 2026.

ANALYSIS

Fiscal Impact:

This legislation will marginally increase the FY2027 operating expenses of the County Council because of annual increases in Council Member salary, beginning after the installation of Council Members elected in 2026. Operating expenses for compensation for the five Council Members will increase by 5% each year through December 2030.

<u>Change in County Council Operating Expenses, calendar year 2026 to FY2030¹</u>					
<u>FY2026 Operating budget</u> line: Legislative, Judicial, and Inspector General					
County Council total operating budget: \$7,907,183					
Proposed annual salary by calendar year, with annual adjustments occurring in December,					
multiplied for 5 Council Members:					
	<u>2026 (current)</u>	<u>2027</u>	<u>2028</u>	<u>2029</u>	<u>2030</u>
County Council	\$416,280	\$437,614	\$458,896	\$481,896	\$505,990
Member Salaries					

The compensation for each individual Council Member installed in December 2026 is below. Note that annual adjustments occur in December on the anniversary of installation.

- December 2026 to December 2027: \$87,418.80, a 5% increase from 2026.
- December 2027 to December 2028: \$91,789.74, a 5% increase from 2027.
- December 2029 to December 2029: \$96,379.23, a 5% increase from 2028.
- December 2029 to December 2030: \$101,198.19, a 5% increase from 2029.

All other stipends, benefits, and allowances for County Council Members will remain at their current levels. Those allowances are:

- \$3,500 annual stipend for the Chair of the County Council.
- \$200 monthly stipend for monthly communication services.
- \$100 for each meeting of the Zoning Board that the member attends.
- \$1,500 4 year stipend for technology costs.
- Access to health and retirement benefits.

2025 Compensation Review Commission

In the year preceding the election of a new County Council, the County forms a [Compensation Review Commission](#). The 2025 Commission studied the salaries and benefits of local elected officials in the state

¹ Note: Proposed salaries would become effective halfway through FY 2027

and made recommendations for the compensation for the term beginning in December 2026 and ending in December 2030. The [2025 Commission's full report](#) is attached as testimony for this legislation.

Amongst other conclusions, the Commission's report states: "the Commission agreed that the position of County Council Member has evolved beyond part-time responsibility and has become a full-time office. While specific code changes on this question will not be included in legislation that adopts the Commission's recommended salaries, the Commission concluded that the County Council, County Executive, and future Charter Review Commissions should consider necessary changes to the County Charter and County Code to reflect the full-time responsibilities of a Member of the County Council".

Budget Implications:

- Salary increases will become effective when the County Council members for the 2026-2030 term are installed in their positions in December 2026. This legislation will not impact the FY2026 budget, and will raise salary expenses in the second half of FY2027.
- In addition to salaries, the County is also responsible for Council Member's health and retirement benefits. According to the Department of Finance, the cost of benefits for each Council Member is approximately \$34,000 per year. Depending on the Member's benefit elections, about [half of this cost is for health insurance](#), and the remainder is split between retirement benefits and employer share of FICA.
- This adjustment in Council Member salary is comparable with the annual compensation increase for general County employees. General County employees typically get an annual step increase of about 3%, and often receive an additional cost of living increase ranging between 1% and 5%.
- In FY2026, the five Council Member salaries represented 5.06% of the County Council's operating budget and less than .1% of the County's full operating budget.

Other Notes:

- [County Code](#) allows the Council to amend this legislation to decrease the recommended compensation and allowances. The Council may not increase the recommendations.

2024 Council Member salary comparison to other counties

2024 County Council/Commission			
<u>County</u>	<u>Elected Council</u>	<u>Annual Salary</u>	<u>Health Benefits</u>
Montgomery County	Council	\$ 161,957.00	Yes
Prince George's County	Council	\$ 138,488.00	Yes
Baltimore City	Council	\$ 78,577.00	Yes
Howard County	Council	\$ 76,860.67	Yes
Baltimore County	Council	\$ 69,000.00	Yes
Harford County	Council	\$ 53,112.00	Yes
Charles County	Commissioner	\$ 51,957.00	Yes
St. Mary's County	Commissioner	\$ 50,750.00	Yes
Carroll County	Commissioner	\$ 49,998.00	Yes

Calvert County	Commissioner	\$ 48,000.00	Yes
Anne Arundel County	Council	\$ 43,214.00	Yes
Washington County	Commissioner	\$ 38,002.00	Yes
Allegany County	Commissioner	\$ 36,037.00	Yes
Frederick County	Council	\$ 35,000.00	
Garrett County	Commissioner	\$ 32,510.00	Yes
Worcester County	Commissioner	\$ 28,277.00	Yes
Cecil County	Council	\$ 25,000.00	
Queen Anne's County	Commissioner	\$ 25,000.00	Yes
Wicomico County	Council	\$ 21,000.00	Yes
Kent County	Commissioner	\$ 20,000.00	Yes
Somerset County	Commissioner	\$ 20,000.00	Yes
Dorchester County	Commissioner	\$ 16,000.00	Yes
Caroline County	Commissioner	\$ 15,000.00	Yes
Talbot County	Commissioner	\$ 14,400.00	Yes
<u>Average</u>		<u>\$ 47,839.15</u>	