

Council Bill 9-2026 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 the Howard County Executive for the term beginning in December 2026.

ANALYSIS

Fiscal Impact:

This legislation will marginally increase the FY2027 operating expenses of the County Executive because of annual cost-of-living increases in County Executive salary, beginning after the installation of the County Executive elected in 2026. Operating expenses for compensation for the County Executive will increase by approximately 2.5% each year through December 2030.

<u>Change in Office of County Executive Operating Expenses, calendar year 2026 to 2030¹</u>					
<u>FY2026 Operating budget</u> line: General Government					
Office of the County Executive total operating budget: \$3,138,527					
Proposed annual salary, assuming 2.5% maximum increase is met each year					
2026 (current)	2027	F028	2029	2030	
County Executive Salary	\$238,504	\$244,466	\$250,578	\$256,842	\$263,263

Note that annual adjustments occur in December on the anniversary of installation. The first year of the term, from December 2026 through December 2027, will have a salary 2.5% higher than the current County Executive's salary. For each year after, there will be an annual percentage increase equal to the increase in the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers ([CPI-U in the Baltimore-Colombia-Towson MD region](#), with an annual cap of 2.5%. For reference, the CPI-U for 2025 was 3.1%.

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

- \$150 monthly stipend for monthly communication services.
- Continued access to health and retirement benefits.

2025 Compensation Review Commission

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

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

Amongst other conclusions, the Commission's report states: "the Commission reached consensus that the salary level and allowances were already well positioned for the office [of County Executive]. The role is defined by Charter as a full-time occupation and is compensated as such. The Commission agreed that the existing salary rate would only be adjusted for cost-of-living increases over the next four years".

Budget Implications:

- Salary increases will become effective when the County Executive for the 2026-2030 term is installed in their position 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 County Executive's health and retirement benefits. According to the Department of Finance, the cost of benefits for the County Executive is approximately \$66,292 per year. Depending on the Executive'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 County Executive salary is comparable with the annual cost of living increases for General County employees, which typically range between 1% and 5% each year.
- In FY2026, the County Executive's salary represented 7.41% of the Office of the County Executive'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 increase or decrease the recommended compensation and allowances.
- The 2017 Compensation Review Commission had utilized the same cost-of-living calculation for the County Executive's salary.

2024 County Executive salary comparison to other counties

Statewide comparison, 2024 Salary			
County Executive			
County	Elected Executive	Annual Salary	Health Benefits
Allegany County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Anne Arundel County	Elected County Exec	\$ 142,000.00	
Baltimore City	Elected Mayor	\$ 209,121.00	Yes
Baltimore County	Elected County Exec	\$ 192,000.00	Yes
Calvert County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Caroline County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Carroll County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Cecil County	Elected County Exec	\$ 98,000.00	Yes
Charles County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Dorchester County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Frederick County	Elected County Exec	\$ 137,000.00	Yes

Garrett County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Harford County	Elected County Exec	\$ 171,107.00	Yes
Howard County	Elected County Exec	\$ 227,012.00	Yes
Kent County			
Montgomery County	Elected County Exec	\$ 231,915.00	Yes
Prince George's County	Elected County Exec	\$ 236,661.00	Yes
Queen Anne's County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Somerset County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
St. Mary's County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Talbot County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Washington County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Wicomico County	Elected County Exec	\$ 107,000.00	Yes
Worcester County	N/A, Commissioner based County		
Average		\$ 175,181.60	