

HB 1550-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2026 SESSION

26-2799

12/09

HOUSE BILL

1550-FN

AN ACT requiring marital masters, arbitrators, mediators, and judicial referees to be commissioned as a justice of peace as a qualification for such positions.

SPONSORS: Rep. Love, Rock. 13

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

ANALYSIS

This bill requires marital masters, arbitrators, mediators, and judicial referees to be commissioned as a justice of the peace in order to qualify for such positions. The bill also requires such individuals to subscribe to the oath or declaration as prescribed by part 2, article 84 of the constitution of New Hampshire.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
 Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
 Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six

AN ACT requiring marital masters, arbitrators, mediators, and judicial referees to be commissioned as a justice of peace as a qualification for such positions.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 New Paragraph; Marital Masters; Justice of the Peace and Oath Requirements. Amend RSA
2 490-D:8 by inserting after paragraph II the following new paragraph:

3 III. Each marital master shall first be commissioned as a justice of the peace, pursuant to
4 RSA 455-A, as a requirement to qualify as a marital master.

5 (a) Marital masters shall renew their commission as a justice of the peace every 5 years
6 by completing the same application process of RSA 455-A:2.

7 (b) In their capacity as a justice of the peace, marital masters shall make and subscribe
8 the oath or declaration as prescribed by part 2, article 84 of the constitution of New Hampshire. An
9 individual who violates said oath after taking the same shall be forthwith dismissed from their
10 position as a justice of the peace.

11 2 New Section; Mediation and Arbitration; Justice of the Peace and Oath Requirements. Amend
12 RSA 490-E by inserting after section 6 the following new section:

13 490-E:7 Justice of the Peace and Oath Requirements. All mediators, arbitrators, and neutral
14 parties involved in dispute resolution under contract with the New Hampshire judicial branch shall
15 first be commissioned as a justice of the peace, pursuant to RSA 455-A, as a requirement to qualify
16 for such position.

17 I. Mediators, arbitrators, and neutral parties involved in dispute resolution under contract
18 with the New Hampshire judicial branch shall renew their commission as a justice of the peace every
19 5 years by completing the same application process of RSA 455-A:2.

20 II. In their capacity as a justice of the peace, mediators, arbitrators, and neutral parties
21 involved in dispute resolution under contract with the New Hampshire judicial branch shall make
22 and subscribe the oath or declaration as prescribed by part 2, article 84 of the constitution of New
23 Hampshire. An individual who violates said oath after taking the same shall be forthwith dismissed
24 from their position as a justice of the peace.

25 3 New Section; Judicial Referees; Justice of the Peace and Oath Requirements. Amend RSA
26 493-A by inserting after section 1-c the following new section:

27 493-A:1-d Justice of the Peace and Oath Requirements. All judicial referees shall first be
28 commissioned as a justice of the peace, pursuant to RSA 455-A, as a requirement to qualify for such
29 position.

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1 I. Judicial referees shall renew their commission as a justice of the peace every 5 years by
2 completing the same application process of RSA 455-A:2.

3 II. In their capacity as a justice of the peace, judicial referees shall make and subscribe the
4 oath or declaration as prescribed by part 2, article 84 of the constitution of New Hampshire. An
5 individual who violates said oath after taking the same shall be forthwith dismissed from their
6 position as a justice of the peace.

7 4 Circuit Court; Referees; Justice of the Peace and Oath Requirements. Amend RSA 490-F:15 to
8 read as follows:

9 490-F:15 Referees. The circuit court, with the consent of the parties shall, and without the
10 consent of the parties may, commit to one or more referees any cause at law or in equity, or the
11 determination of any question of fact pending in the court wherein the parties are not, as matter of
12 right, entitled to a trial by jury; and with the consent of the parties shall in the same manner commit
13 any other cause or the determination of any other question of fact. ***In order for the circuit court
14 to commit a referee to a cause at law or in equity or the determination of any question of
15 fact, said referee shall first be in compliance with the provisions of RSA 493-A:1-d.***

16 5 Effective Date. This act shall take effect January 1, 2027.

**HB 1550-FN- FISCAL NOTE
AS INTRODUCED**

AN ACT requiring marital masters, arbitrators, mediators, and judicial referees to be commissioned as a justice of peace as a qualification for such positions.

FISCAL IMPACT: This bill does not provide funding.

Estimated State Impact				
	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>	None			
Expenditures*	\$0	\$0	Indeterminable Increase \$10,000 to \$50,000	Less than \$10,000
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	General Fund			
Appropriations*	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	None			

*Expenditure = Cost of bill

*Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill

METHODOLOGY:

This bill requires marital masters, arbitrators, mediators and judicial referees under contract with the Judicial Branch to be commissioned as justices of the peace pursuant to RSA 455-A, and to renew their commission every five years.

The Judicial Branch states this bill will result in indeterminable increases in state expenditures. The Branch anticipates substantial administrative work prior to implementation to verify compliance, assist parties in meeting credentialing requirements, and process reimbursements for the \$75 justice of the peace application fee, which the Branch assumes it would need to pay on behalf of each affected individual. Based on the number of marital masters, judicial referees, mediators, and arbitrators, the Branch estimates more than \$10,000 but less than \$50,000 in expenditures in the months prior to implementation.

After implementation, ongoing expenditures for continued credentialing support and periodic renewals will be indeterminable but likely less than \$10,000 per year. The Branch notes that delays in the credentialing process could delay case processing; however, the financial effect of such delays on the court system or litigants cannot be quantified.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

Judicial Branch