

HR 6037

Fair Access to Legal Counsel Act of 2020

Congress: 116 (2019–2021, Ended)

Chamber: House

Policy Area: Law

Introduced: Feb 28, 2020

Current Status: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

Latest Action: Referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary. (Feb 28, 2020)

Official Text: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/6037>

Sponsor

Name: Rep. Sarbanes, John P. [D-MD-3]

Party: Democratic • **State:** MD • **Chamber:** House

Cosponsors (5 total)

Cosponsor	Party / State	Role	Date Joined
Rep. Bass, Karen [D-CA-37]	D · CA		Feb 28, 2020
Rep. Johnson, Henry C. "Hank," Jr. [D-GA-4]	D · GA		Feb 28, 2020
Rep. Kennedy, Joseph P., III [D-MA-4]	D · MA		Feb 28, 2020
Rep. Nadler, Jerrold [D-NY-10]	D · NY		Feb 28, 2020
Rep. Scanlon, Mary Gay [D-PA-5]	D · PA		Feb 28, 2020

Committee Activity

Committee	Chamber	Activity	Date
Judiciary Committee	House	Referred To	Feb 28, 2020

Subjects & Policy Tags

Policy Area:

Law

Related Bills

No related bills are listed.

Fair Access to Legal Counsel Act of 2020

This bill requires a court to consider specified factors when determining whether to provide counsel for a civil litigant who cannot afford counsel. In addition, the bill authorizes a court to appoint, rather than merely request, counsel for such a litigant.

Under current law, a court may request counsel to represent a civil litigant who cannot afford counsel. The bill instead authorizes the court to appoint counsel upon request by the litigant. A court must inform civil litigants appearing without counsel of their right to make such a request.

In considering whether to grant a civil litigant's request for counsel, a court generally must consider factors such as the complexity of the case, any mental or physical limitations faced by the litigant, and whether any opposing party is represented by counsel. The court may also appoint counsel for limited purposes, including for the purpose of advising the court as to whether a full appointment is warranted.

The bill also eliminates the requirement for a court to dismiss a civil litigant's case if the litigant's allegation of poverty is untrue.

Actions Timeline

- **Feb 28, 2020:** Introduced in House
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