



2025-2026 General Assembly

SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 16.19: Establish Procedure for Complex Family Financial Case Disposition

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 16.19

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Section 16.19 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257), as amended by Sec. 5.1 of S.L. 2026-42 (House Bill 56), establishes a procedure for certain claims related to equitable distribution, alimony, postseparation support, and child support to be designated as a complex family financial case and heard by a Complex Family Financial Court Judge.

By September 1, 2026, the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court (Chief Justice) must appoint 3 Complex Family Financial Court Judges who meet minimum requirements and designate 1 of them as the Chief Complex Family Financial Court Judge. In addition to scheduling hearings, the Chief Judge must determine which cases are complex family financial cases and must collaborate with the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide an annual report, beginning August 1, 2027, on the program.

Beginning January 1, 2027, a party can file a notice designating a claim as a complex family financial case and the other party may oppose it. This section provides factors to be considered by the Chief Complex Family Financial Court Judge when determining whether a case is a complex family financial case including the value of real and personal property, the existence of issues related to trusts, businesses, and retirement accounts, and other financial issues that may make a determination of property division or support obligations more complex.

If a claim is designated as a complex family financial claim, there is an additional court cost of \$1,100 that is paid in equal shares by the parties.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.

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