

Chapter 224

(House Bill 154)

AN ACT concerning

Maryland Home Builder Registration Act – Guaranty Fund – Claims

FOR the purpose of altering the maximum amount of a claim against the Home Builder Guaranty Fund for which the Consumer Protection Division may issue a certain proposed order; altering the number of days, following certain notice by the Division, after which the Division may bring a certain action in court against a registered home builder who fails to reimburse the Fund in full for payment of a certain claim; and generally relating to the Maryland Home Builder Registration Act and the Home Builder Guaranty Fund.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Business Regulation

Section 4.5–707 and 4.5–711

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2010 Replacement Volume and 2014 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Business Regulation

4.5–707.

(a) The procedures for notice, hearings, and judicial review that apply to proceedings under Title 3, Subtitle 2 of the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article also apply to proceedings to recover from the Guaranty Fund.

(b) On receipt of a claim, the Division shall:

(1) send a copy of the claim to the registrant alleged to be responsible for the actual loss; and

(2) require a written response to the claim within 30 days.

(c) (1) The Division:

(i) shall review the claim and any response to it; and

(ii) may refer the claim for investigation.

(2) On the basis of its review and any investigation, the Division may:

- Hearings;
- (i) set the matter for a hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings;
 - (ii) dismiss the claim, if the claim is frivolous, legally insufficient, or made in bad faith; or
 - (iii) if the total claim against a particular registrant does not exceed ~~[\$5,000]~~ **\$7,500**, issue a proposed order to pay all or part of the claim or deny the claim.

(d) (1) The Division shall send a proposed order issued under subsection (c)(2)(iii) of this section to the claimant and the registrant, at the most recent address on record with the Division, by:

- (i) personal delivery; or
- (ii) both regular mail and certified mail, return receipt requested.

(2) Within 21 days after service, receipt, or attempted delivery of the proposed order, the claimant or registrant may submit to the Division:

- (i) a written request for a hearing before the Division; or
- (ii) a written exception to the proposed order.

(3) If the claimant or registrant submits a timely exception to the proposed order, the Division may:

- (i) issue a revised proposed order;
- (ii) set a hearing on the claim; or
- (iii) dismiss the claim.

(4) Unless the claimant or registrant submits a timely request for a hearing or timely exception, the proposed order is final.

(e) At a hearing on a claim, the claimant has the burden of proof.

(f) A claimant and registrant may participate in a Guaranty Fund proceeding without representation by counsel.

4.5-711.

(a) (1) After the Division pays a claim from the Guaranty Fund:

(i) the Division is subrogated to all rights of the claimant in the claim up to the amount paid;

(ii) the claimant shall assign to the Division all rights of the claimant in the claim up to the amount paid; and

(iii) the Division has a right to reimbursement of the Guaranty Fund by the registrant whom the Division finds responsible for the act or omission giving rise to the claim for:

1. the amount paid from the Guaranty Fund; and

2. interest on that amount at a rate determined by the Division so as not to exceed the legal rate of interest on a judgment in place at the time the claim is approved.

(2) All money that the Division recovers on a claim shall be deposited in the Guaranty Fund.

(b) If, within [30] **60** days after the Division gives notice, a registrant on whose account a claim was paid does not reimburse the Guaranty Fund in full, the Division may sue the registrant in a court of competent jurisdiction for the unreimbursed amount.

(c) The Division is entitled to a judgment for the unreimbursed amount if the Division proves that:

(1) a claim was paid from the Guaranty Fund on account of the registrant;

(2) the registrant has not reimbursed the Guaranty Fund in full;

(3) the registrant was given notice and an opportunity to participate in a hearing on the claim before the Division; and

(4) (i) the Division directed payment based on a final judgment of a court of competent jurisdiction or a final award in arbitration; or

(ii) the decision or order of the Division is final in accordance with Title 10, Subtitle 2 of the State Government Article and there is no pending appeal.

(d) The Division may refer to the Central Collection Unit for collection under §§ 13–912 through 13–919 of the Tax – General Article a debt owed to the Division by a registrant on whose account a claim was paid from the Guaranty Fund and who is at least 12 months behind in reimbursement payments to the Guaranty Fund.

(e) For the purpose of excepting to a discharge of a registrant under federal bankruptcy law, the Division is a creditor of the registrant for the amount paid from the Guaranty Fund.

(f) (1) (i) If a person liable for reimbursing the Guaranty Fund under this section receives a demand for reimbursement and fails to reimburse the Guaranty Fund, the reimbursement amount and any accrued interest or costs are a lien in favor of the State on any real property of the person if the lien is recorded and indexed as provided in this subsection.

(ii) Interest shall continue at the rate of interest on a judgment as provided in § 11-107(a) of the Courts Article until the full amount due the Guaranty Fund is paid.

(2) The lien in favor of the State created by this subsection may not attach to specific property until the State Central Collection Unit records written notice of the lien in the office of the clerk of the court for the county in which the property subject to the lien or any part of the property is located.

(3) The lien in favor of the State created by this subsection does not have priority as to any specific property over any person who is a lienholder of record at the time the notice required under paragraph (2) of this subsection is recorded.

(4) The notice required under paragraph (2) of this subsection shall contain:

(i) the name and address of the person against whose property the lien exists;

(ii) the amount of the lien;

(iii) a description of or reference to the property subject to the lien;
and

(iv) the date the Guaranty Fund paid the claim giving rise to the lien.

(5) On presentation of a release of any lien in favor of the State created by this subsection, the clerk of the court in which the lien is recorded and indexed shall record and index the release and shall note in the lien docket the date the release is filed and the fact that the lien is released.

(6) The notice required under paragraph (2) of this subsection and any release filed under paragraph (5) of this subsection shall be indexed with the judgment lien records maintained by the office of the clerk of the court where the notice is recorded.

(7) The clerk may collect a reasonable fee for recording and indexing each notice of lien or release of any lien under this subsection.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2015.

Approved by the Governor, May 12, 2015.