

Chapter 550

(Senate Bill 226)

AN ACT concerning

Real Property – Wrongful Detainer and Distress Actions – Trial by Jury

FOR the purpose of authorizing a party to a certain wrongful detainer or distress action brought in the District Court to demand a trial by jury in accordance with certain provisions of law, subject to certain provisions of law; making certain provisions of law regarding jury demands applicable to wrongful detainer actions; and generally relating to wrongful detainer and distress actions.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Real Property
Section 8–118.1(a)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2015 Replacement Volume and 2017 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Real Property
Section 8–302, 8–601, and 14–132
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2015 Replacement Volume and 2017 Supplement)

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

Article – Real Property

8–118.1.

(a) (1) In an action under § 14–132 of this article in which a party demands a jury trial, the District Court immediately shall enter an order directing the person or entity in possession to pay the monthly fair rental value of the premises that is subject to the action, or such other amount as the court may determine is proper, starting as of the date the action was filed, as required in subsection (b) of this section.

(2) The order shall require the amount determined by the court to be paid within 5 days of the date of the order.

8–302.

(a) Distress for rent is an action at law and shall be brought as provided in this section.

(b) **[Jurisdiction] ORIGINAL JURISDICTION** in a case of distress for rent is vested exclusively in the District Court regardless of the amount of rent for which distress is brought, notwithstanding any limitation imposed by law on the civil monetary jurisdiction of such court.

(c) An action of distress may be brought only for unpaid rent under a written lease for a term of more than three months, or under a tenancy at will or a periodic tenancy that has continued more than three months.

(d) An action of distress shall be brought in the county where the leased premises lie.

(E) A PARTY TO AN ACTION OF DISTRESS BROUGHT IN THE DISTRICT COURT UNDER THIS SECTION MAY DEMAND A TRIAL BY JURY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBTITLE 6 OF THIS ARTICLE.

8–601.

Any party to an action brought in the District Court under this title **OR § 14–132 OF THIS ARTICLE** in which the amount in controversy meets the requirements for a trial by jury may, in accordance with this subtitle, demand a trial by jury.

14–132.

(a) In this section, “wrongful detainer” means to hold possession of real property without the right of possession.

(b) This section does not apply if:

(1) The person in actual possession of the property has been granted possession under a court order;

(2) A remedy is available under Title 8 of this article; or

(3) Any other exclusive means to recover possession is provided by statute or rule.

(c) A person may not hold possession of property unless the person is entitled to possession of the property under the law.

(d) (1) If a person violates subsection (c) of this section, a person claiming possession may make complaint in writing to the District Court of the county in which the property is located.

(2) On receipt of a complaint under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the court shall summons immediately the person in possession to appear before the court on

the day specified in the summons to show cause, if any, why restitution of the possession of the property to the person filing the complaint should not be made.

(3) If, for any reason, the person in actual possession cannot be found, the person authorized to serve process by the Maryland Rules shall affix an attested copy of the summons conspicuously on the property.

(4) If notice of the summons is sent to the person in possession by first-class mail, the affixing of the summons in accordance with paragraph (3) of this subsection shall constitute sufficient service to support restitution of possession.

(e) A counterclaim or cross-claim may not be filed in an action brought under this section.

(f) (1) If the court determines that the complainant is legally entitled to possession, the court shall:

(i) Give judgment for restitution of the possession of the property to the complainant; and

(ii) Issue its warrant to the sheriff or constable commanding the sheriff or constable to deliver possession to the complainant.

(2) The court may also give judgment in favor of the complainant for damages due to the wrongful detainer and for court costs and attorney fees if:

(i) The complainant claimed damages in the complaint; and

(ii) The court finds that:

1. The person in actual possession was personally served with the summons; or

2. There was service of process or submission to the jurisdiction of the court as would support a judgment in contract or tort.

(3) A person in actual possession who is not personally served with a summons is not subject to the personal jurisdiction of the District Court if the person appears in response to the summons and prior to the time that evidence is taken by the court and asserts that the appearance is only for the purpose of defending an in rem action.

(G) SUBJECT TO § 8-118.1 OF THIS ARTICLE, A PARTY TO A WRONGFUL DETAINER ACTION BROUGHT IN THE DISTRICT COURT UNDER THIS SECTION MAY DEMAND A TRIAL BY JURY IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 8, SUBTITLE 6 OF THIS ARTICLE.

[(g)] (H) (1) Not later than 10 days from the entry of the judgment of the District Court, either party may appeal to the circuit court for the county in which the property is located.

(2) The person in actual possession of the property may retain possession until the determination of the appeal if the person:

(i) Files with the court an affidavit that the appeal is not taken for delay; and

(ii) 1. Files sufficient bond with one or more securities conditioned on diligent prosecution of the appeal; or

2. Pays to the complainant or into the appellate court:

A. The fair rental value of the property for the entire period of possession up to the date of judgment;

B. All court costs in the case;

C. All losses or damages other than the fair rental value of the property up to the day of judgment that the court determined to be due because of the detention of possession; and

D. The fair rental value of the property during the pendency of the appeal.

(3) On application of either party, the court shall set a hearing date for the appeal that is not less than 5 days or more than 15 days after the application for appeal.

(4) Notice of the order for a hearing shall be served on the parties or the parties' counsels not less than 5 days before the hearing.

[(h)] (I) If the judgment of the circuit court shall be in favor of the person claiming possession, a warrant shall be issued by the court to the sheriff, who shall proceed immediately to execute the warrant.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2018.

Approved by the Governor, May 8, 2018.