

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 56

(Senator Norman)

Judicial Proceedings

Civil Actions and Procedures - Garnishments - Spousal Property

This bill establishes a presumption that a garnishment against property held jointly by spouses in specified financial institutions is valid unless, within 30 days after service of the writ of garnishment on the garnishee, either spouse (1) files a motion objecting to the garnishment and (2) serves a copy of the motion on the judgment creditor, the garnishee, and any other person named on the account. It also establishes that for property jointly held by spouses to be excluded from valid garnishment, as authorized in specified circumstances, the persons named on the account must have been married prior to the date of entry of judgment.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is procedural/technical in nature and is not anticipated to materially affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The bill is procedural/technical in nature and is not anticipated to materially affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: A garnishment against property held in a bank, trust company, credit union, savings bank, or savings and loan association or any of their affiliates or subsidiaries is not valid:

- against property held jointly by a husband and wife, unless both owners are judgment debtors, so long as the account was established as a joint account prior to the date of entry of judgment giving rise to the garnishment;
- against property held by one person in trust for that person and another person or persons, unless all of the persons are judgment debtors;
- against property held by one or more persons in trust for another person or persons, unless all of the persons are judgment debtors; or
- against property to be payable on the death of one or more persons to another person or persons, unless all of the persons are judgment debtors.

Regardless of these provisions, if property held in an account in the name of two or more persons at a bank, trust company, credit union, savings bank, or savings and loan association or any of their affiliates or subsidiaries is garnished, and fewer than all of the persons named on the account are the judgment debtors, the garnishee may answer the writ of garnishment by stating (1) that the property is held in an account at the garnishee in the name of two or more persons and at least one but not all of the persons are judgment debtors and (2) the amount held in the account at the time the writ of garnishment was served on the garnishee.

If the garnishee answers to this effect, the garnishee must hold the lesser of the amount of the judgment or the entire amount in the account subject to an entry of a court order releasing the property held by the garnishee or a final judgment in the garnishment proceeding.

If the garnishee answers and holds property held in the name of multiple persons, not all of whom are judgment debtors, the garnishee may not be held liable to the judgment creditor or to any person named on the account for wrongful dishonor or for any other claim relating to the garnishment.

State and Local Fiscal Effect: The Judiciary can make necessary form revisions with existing resources. The District Court and the circuit courts can handle any additional hearings with existing budgeted resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Senate Bill 512 of 2017, a similar bill, was heard in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, but no further action was taken. SB 397 of 2016, another similar bill, passed the Senate and received a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Comptroller's Office; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); Department of Human Services; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 12, 2018
nb/kdm

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