

# SENATE BILL 657

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CF 5lr2370

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By: **Senators Ready, Gile, Salling, and Simonaire**

Introduced and read first time: January 25, 2025

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Eminent Domain – Just Compensation – Fees and Costs**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing that damages to be awarded for the taking of land in a  
4 condemnation proceeding include, in addition to the fair market value of the land  
5 taken, any legal, expert, or other fees or costs of the action incurred by a defendant;  
6 and generally relating to eminent domain.

7 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
8 Article – Real Property  
9 Section 12–104  
10 Annotated Code of Maryland  
11 (2023 Replacement Volume and 2024 Supplement)

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

14 **Article – Real Property**

15 12–104.

16 (a) The damages to be awarded for the taking of land [is its] **ARE:**

17 **(1) THE fair market value OF THE LAND; AND**

18 **(2) ANY LEGAL, EXPERT, OR OTHER FEES OR COSTS OF THE**  
19 **CONDEMNATION PROCEEDING INCURRED BY THE DEFENDANT.**

20 (b) The damages to be awarded where land, or any part of it, is taken is the fair  
21 market value of the part taken, but not less than the actual value of the part taken plus  
22 any severance or resulting damages to the remaining land by reason of the taking and of

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 future use by the plaintiff of the part taken. The severance or resulting damages shall be  
2 diminished to the extent of the value of the special (particular) benefits to the remainder  
3 arising from the plaintiff's future use of the part taken.

4 (c) For the purpose of determining the extent of the taking and the valuation of  
5 the tenant's interest in a condemnation proceeding, no improvement or installation which  
6 otherwise would be deemed part of the land shall be deemed personal property so as to be  
7 excluded from the taking solely because of the private right of a tenant, as against the  
8 owner of any other interest in the land sought to be condemned, to remove the improvement  
9 or installation, unless the tenant exercises his right to remove it prior to the date when his  
10 answer is due, or states in his answer his election to exercise this right.

11 (d) The damages to be awarded for the taking of a structure, such as a church or  
12 place of religious worship, held in fee simple, or under a lease renewable forever, by or for  
13 the benefit of a religious body and regularly used by the religious body, are the cost of  
14 reproducing or replacing the improvements, adjusted for physical and functional  
15 depreciation, to which shall be added the fair market value of the land.

16 (e) (1) The damages to be awarded for the taking of all land owned and  
17 designated by a public body as park land, open space, or recreation area is the fair market  
18 value as of the valuation date, of other land substantially similar in size and character and  
19 of comparable quality for park, open space, or recreational purposes for the community  
20 which made use of the land to be taken. No damages may be awarded unless other land is  
21 acquired for park, open space, or recreational purposes. No awarded damages may be less  
22 than the fair market value of the land to be taken.

23 (2) The damages to be awarded for the taking of part of the park land, open  
24 space, or recreation area is the fair market value of the part taken, but not less than the  
25 actual value of the replacement land as defined in paragraph (1) of this subsection plus any  
26 severance or resulting damages to the remaining land by reason of the taking and of the  
27 future use by the plaintiff of the part taken. The severance or resulting damages are to be  
28 diminished to the extent of the value of the special (particular) benefits to the remainder  
29 arising from the plaintiff's future use of the land taken.

30 (3) Where the land, or any part of it, taken pursuant to this subsection  
31 contains improvements, the damages to be awarded, in addition to that provided for in  
32 paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subsection, shall include the reasonable cost as of the  
33 valuation date of providing new improvements of substantially the same size, comparable  
34 character, and for the same purpose as those taken.

35 (f) The damages to be awarded for the taking of land or an interest in land over  
36 which an easement in gross or other right to restrict its use has been granted pursuant to  
37 § 2-504 of the Agriculture Article shall be as provided for in this subsection and § 2-515 of  
38 the Agriculture Article:

39 (1) The damages to be awarded for the taking of an entire tract is its fair  
40 market value after deducting the lesser of (a) the value of the easement granted, or (b) the

1 excess of the aggregate amount of the property taxes that would have been due on the  
2 property if the easement had not been granted above the aggregate amount of property  
3 taxes actually paid on the property since the easement was granted.

4           (2) The damages to be awarded where part of a tract of land is taken is the  
5 fair market value of the part taken less the deduction computed as described in paragraph  
6 (1) of this subsection, but not less than the actual value of the part taken less the deduction  
7 computed as described in paragraph (1) of this subsection, plus any severance or resulting  
8 damages to the remaining land by reason of the taking and of future use by the plaintiff of  
9 the part taken.

10           (g) If any easement in gross or other right to restrict use of land or any interest  
11 in land has been donated to the Maryland Historical Trust or the Maryland Environmental  
12 Trust, damages shall be awarded in any condemnation proceedings under this title to the  
13 fee owner and leasehold owner, as their interests may appear, and shall be the fair market  
14 value of the land or interest in it, computed as though the easement or other right did not  
15 exist.

16           SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
17 October 1, 2025.