

Chapter 172

(Senate Bill 694)

AN ACT concerning

Human Relations – Violations of County Discrimination Laws – Complaints

FOR the purpose of establishing that filing a certain complaint with the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights satisfies certain prerequisites to commencing a civil action alleging the violation of a county discrimination law; and generally relating to county discrimination laws.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – State Government
Section 20–1004(a) and (c)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – State Government
Section 20–1202 and 20–1203
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – State Government
Section 20–1204
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

Article – State Government

20–1004.

(a) Any person claiming to be aggrieved by an alleged discriminatory act may file a complaint with the Commission.

(c) (1) (i) Except as provided in paragraphs (2) and (3) of this subsection, a complaint shall be filed within 6 months after the date on which the alleged discriminatory act occurred.

(ii) A complaint filed with a federal or local human relations commission within 6 months after the date on which the alleged discriminatory act occurred shall be deemed to have complied with subparagraph (i) of this paragraph.

(2) (i) A complaint alleging an unlawful employment practice other than harassment shall be filed within 300 days after the date on which the alleged discriminatory act occurred.

(ii) A complaint filed with a federal human relations commission within 6 months or a local human relations commission within 300 days shall be deemed to have complied with subparagraph (i) of this paragraph.

(3) (i) A complaint alleging harassment against an employer shall be filed within 2 years after the date on which the alleged harassment occurred.

(ii) A complaint filed with a federal human relations commission within 6 months or a local human relations commission within 2 years after the date on which the alleged harassment occurred shall be deemed to have complied with subparagraph (i) of this paragraph.

20-1202.

(a) This section applies only in Howard County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County.

(b) In accordance with this section, a person that is subjected to a discriminatory act prohibited by the county code may bring and maintain a civil action against the person that committed the alleged discriminatory act for damages, injunctive relief, or other civil relief.

(c) (1) An action under subsection (b) of this section shall be commenced in the circuit court for the county in which the alleged discriminatory act occurred within 2 years after the occurrence of the alleged discriminatory act.

(2) (i) Subject to paragraph (1) of this subsection, an action under subsection (b) of this section alleging discrimination in employment or public accommodations may not be commenced sooner than 45 days after the aggrieved person files a complaint with:

1. the county unit responsible for handling violations of the county discrimination laws; **OR**

2. **THE COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 20-1004 OF THIS TITLE.**

(ii) Subject to paragraph (1) of this subsection, an action under subsection (b) of this section alleging discrimination in real estate may be commenced at any time.

(d) In a civil action under this section, the court may award the prevailing party reasonable attorney's fees, expert witness fees, and costs.

20–1203.

(a) This section applies only in Baltimore County.

(b) In accordance with this section, a person that is employed by an employer with fewer than 15 employees and that is subjected to a discriminatory act prohibited by the county code may bring and maintain a civil action against the employer that committed the alleged discriminatory act for relief as provided under subsection (d) of this section.

(c) (1) An action under subsection (b) of this section shall be commenced in the Circuit Court for Baltimore County within 2 years after the occurrence of the alleged discriminatory act.

(2) Subject to paragraph (1) of this subsection, an action under subsection (b) of this section may not be commenced sooner than 60 days after the aggrieved person files a complaint with:

(I) the county unit responsible for handling violations of the county discrimination laws; **OR**

(II) **THE COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 20–1004 OF THIS TITLE.**

(d) (1) In a civil action under this section, the court may award the prevailing party:

(i) injunctive relief;

(ii) compensatory damages, including back pay; or

(iii) both injunctive relief and compensatory damages.

(2) A prevailing party may not be awarded punitive damages under this section.

(3) The court may award the prevailing party reasonable attorney's fees.

20–1204.

(A) THIS SECTION APPLIES IN ANY COUNTY OTHER THAN BALTIMORE COUNTY, HOWARD COUNTY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, OR PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY.

(B) A COMPLAINT FILED IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 20-1004 OF THIS TITLE SATISFIES ANY REQUIREMENT TO EXHAUST REMEDIES BEFORE FILING A CIVIL ACTION IMPOSED BY A COUNTY OR LOCAL UNIT RESPONSIBLE FOR HANDLING VIOLATIONS OF COUNTY OR LOCAL DISCRIMINATION LAWS.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor, April 28, 2026.