

HOUSE BILL 130

E1, E4

6lr1066

(PRE-FILED)

By: **Delegate Ruff**

Requested: October 2, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Criminal Law – Deed Fraud – Prohibition, Deed Fraud Prevention Grant Fund,**
3 **and Task Force to Study Deed Fraud**

4 FOR the purpose of prohibiting the intentional fraudulent sale, conveyance, or lease or
5 attempted sale, conveyance, or lease of real property by a person who does not own
6 the real property; prohibiting the acquisition, sale, or conveyance or the attempted
7 acquisition, sale, or conveyance of real property by deception, intimidation, threat,
8 or undue influence; establishing the Deed Fraud Prevention Grant Fund;
9 establishing the Task Force to Study Deed Fraud; and generally relating to deed
10 fraud.

11 BY adding to

12 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings

13 Section 5–106(kk)

14 Annotated Code of Maryland

15 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

16 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

17 Article – Criminal Law

18 Section 8–601

19 Annotated Code of Maryland

20 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

21 BY adding to

22 Article – Criminal Law

23 Section 8–906

24 Annotated Code of Maryland

25 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

2 Article – Public Safety

3 Section 2–307

4 Annotated Code of Maryland

5 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

6 BY adding to

7 Article – Public Safety

8 Section 2–801 and 2–802 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 8. Deed Fraud
9 Prevention Grant Fund”

10 Annotated Code of Maryland

11 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

12 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

13 Article – State Finance and Procurement

14 Section 6–226(a)(2)(i) and (ii)

15 Annotated Code of Maryland

16 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

17 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

18 Article – State Finance and Procurement

19 Section 6–226(a)(2)(iii)212. and 213.

20 Annotated Code of Maryland

21 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

22 BY adding to

23 Article – State Finance and Procurement

24 Section 6–226(a)(2)(iii)214.

25 Annotated Code of Maryland

26 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

27 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

28 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

29 **Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings**

30 5–106.

31 **(KK) A PROSECUTION FOR A VIOLATION OF § 8–906(C) OF THE CRIMINAL
32 LAW ARTICLE SHALL BE INSTITUTED WITHIN 1 YEAR AFTER THE VICTIM OF THE
33 OFFENSE KNEW OR REASONABLY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT THE FRAUD
34 OCCURRED.**

35 **Article – Criminal Law**

36 8–601.

1 (a) A person, with intent to defraud another, may not counterfeit, cause to be
2 counterfeited, or willingly aid or assist in counterfeiting any:

3 (1) bond;

4 (2) check;

5 (3) [deed;

6 (4)] draft;

7 [§ 87(2)(b)(i)] (4) endorsement or assignment of a bond, draft, check, or promissory
8 note;

10 [(7)] (6) letter of credit;

12 [(9)] (8) power of attorney;

13 [(10)] (9) promissory note;

14 [11] (10) release or discharge for money or property;

15 [12] (11) title to a motor vehicle;

17 [14] (13) will or codicil.

18 (b) A person may not knowingly, willfully, and with fraudulent intent possess a
19 counterfeit of any of the items listed in subsection (a) of this section.

20 (c) (1) A person who violates subsection (a) of this section is guilty of a felony
21 and on conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 10 years or a fine not exceeding
22 \$1,000 or both.

(2) A person who violates subsection (b) of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 3 years or a fine not exceeding \$1,000 or both.

26 (d) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the prosecution of an alleged
27 violation of this section or for an alleged violation of a crime based on an act that establishes
28 a violation of this section may be commenced in any county in which:

- 1 (1) an element of the crime occurred;
- 2 (2) the [deed or other] alleged counterfeit instrument is recorded in the
- 3 county land records, filed with the clerk of the circuit court, or filed with the register of
- 4 wills;
- 5 (3) the victim resides; or
- 6 (4) if the victim is not an individual, the victim conducts business.

7 **8-906.**

8 (A) **A PERSON, WITH INTENT TO DEFRAUD ANOTHER, MAY NOT:**

9 (1) CLAIM TO SELL OR CONVEY OR ATTEMPT TO SELL OR CONVEY
10 REAL PROPERTY THAT THE GRANTOR DOES NOT OWN;

11 (2) CLAIM TO SELL OR CONVEY OR ATTEMPT TO SELL OR CONVEY
12 REAL PROPERTY THAT THE GRANTOR LACKS SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY TO TRANSFER;

13 (3) CLAIM TO LEASE OR ATTEMPT TO LEASE REAL PROPERTY THAT
14 BELONGS TO ANOTHER;

15 (4) OBTAIN OR ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN, OR SELL OR CONVEY, OR
16 ATTEMPT TO SELL OR CONVEY THE REAL PROPERTY OF ANOTHER THROUGH THE
17 EXECUTION OF A DEED BY THE RIGHTFUL OWNER OF THE PROPERTY BY DECEPTION,
18 INTIMIDATION, THREAT, OR UNDUE INFLUENCE;

19 (5) COUNTERFEIT A DEED OR CAUSE A DEED TO BE COUNTERFEITED;
20 OR

21 (6) RECORD A DEED OR CAUSE A DEED TO BE RECORDED IN
22 FURTHERANCE OF A VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION.

23 (B) **A PERSON MAY NOT AID OR ASSIST ANOTHER IN A VIOLATION OF**
24 **SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION.**

25 (C) **A PERSON MAY NOT KNOWINGLY, WILLFULLY, AND WITH FRAUDULENT**
26 **INTENT POSSESS A COUNTERFEIT DEED.**

27 (D) (1) **A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (A) OR (B) OF THIS**
28 **SECTION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO**
29 **IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 10 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$7,500 OR**

1 BOTH.

2 (2) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION IS
3 GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT
4 NOT EXCEEDING 3 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$7,500 OR BOTH.

5 (E) NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF LAW, THE PROSECUTION
6 OF AN ALLEGED VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION OR FOR AN ALLEGED VIOLATION OF A
7 CRIME BASED ON AN ACT THAT ESTABLISHES A VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION MAY BE
8 COMMENCED IN ANY COUNTY IN WHICH:

9 (1) AN ELEMENT OF THE CRIME OCCURRED;

10 (2) THE DEED IS RECORDED IN THE COUNTY LAND RECORDS;

11 (3) THE VICTIM RESIDES; OR

12 (4) IF THE VICTIM IS NOT AN INDIVIDUAL, THE VICTIM CONDUCTS
13 BUSINESS.

14 (F) FINES COLLECTED UNDER THIS SECTION SHALL BE PAID INTO THE
15 DEED FRAUD PREVENTION GRANT FUND UNDER § 2-802 OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY
16 ARTICLE.

17 Article – Public Safety

18 2-307.

19 (a) (1) The Department shall collect, analyze, and disseminate:

20 (i) information about the incidence of crime in the State,
21 INCLUDING DISAGGREGATED INFORMATION ON INCIDENTS OF FRAUD WITH
22 SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON VIOLATIONS OF § 8-906 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW
23 ARTICLE; and

24 (ii) information, including race and sex, on the total number of law
25 enforcement employees, de-identified and disaggregated by:

26 1. position for civilian employees; and

27 2. rank for sworn employees.

28 (2) Each law enforcement agency shall provide the Department with the
29 information described in paragraph (1) of this subsection in the format that the Secretary
30 requires.

(4) The Department shall make quarterly reports to the Commission on Civil Rights about the information described in paragraph (1) of this subsection.

SUBTITLE 8. DEED FRAUD PREVENTION GRANT FUND.

11 2-801.

12 (A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
13 INDICATED.

14 (B) "DEED FRAUD" MEANS A VIOLATION OF § 8-906 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW
15 ARTICLE.

(C) "FUND" MEANS THE DEED FRAUD PREVENTION GRANT FUND.

17 2-802.

18 (A) THERE IS A DEED FRAUD PREVENTION GRANT FUND.

19 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO PROVIDE GRANTS TO:

20 (1) AID STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN
21 IDENTIFYING AND PREVENTING DEED FRAUD:

26 (C) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE FUND

27 (D) THE DEPARTMENT, IN COORDINATION WITH THE MARYLAND LEGAL

1 SERVICES CORPORATION, MAY ESTABLISH STANDARDS TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY
2 FOR GRANTS UNDER THE FUND.

3 (E) (1) THE FUND IS A SPECIAL, NONLAPSING FUND THAT IS NOT
4 SUBJECT TO § 7-302 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

5 (2) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL HOLD THE FUND SEPARATELY,
6 AND THE COMPTROLLER SHALL ACCOUNT FOR THE FUND.

7 (F) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:

8 (1) MONEY APPROPRIATED IN THE STATE BUDGET TO THE FUND;

9 (2) FINES COLLECTED UNDER § 8-906 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW
10 ARTICLE;

11 (3) INTEREST EARNINGS; AND

12 (4) ANY OTHER MONEY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE ACCEPTED FOR
13 THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND.

14 (G) THE FUND MAY BE USED ONLY TO:

15 (1) CARRY OUT THE PURPOSES OF THIS SUBTITLE; AND

16 (2) PAY FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES OF OPERATING THE
17 FUND.

18 (H) (1) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL INVEST THE MONEY OF THE FUND
19 IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STATE MONEY MAY BE INVESTED.

20 (2) ANY INTEREST EARNINGS OF THE FUND SHALL BE CREDITED TO
21 THE FUND.

22 (I) EXPENDITURES FROM THE FUND MAY BE MADE ONLY IN ACCORDANCE
23 WITH THE STATE BUDGET.

24 (J) MONEY EXPENDED FROM THE FUND IS SUPPLEMENTAL TO AND IS NOT
25 INTENDED TO TAKE THE PLACE OF FUNDING THAT OTHERWISE WOULD BE
26 APPROPRIATED FOR DEED FRAUD PREVENTION.

27 (K) IN FISCAL YEAR 2028, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL
28 BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$200,000 TO THE FUND.

Article – State Finance and Procurement

2 6–226.

3 (a) (2) (i) This paragraph does not apply in fiscal years 2024 through 2028.

4 (ii) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and unless
5 inconsistent with a federal law, grant agreement, or other federal requirement or with the
6 terms of a gift or settlement agreement, net interest on all State money allocated by the
7 State Treasurer under this section to special funds or accounts, and otherwise entitled to
8 receive interest earnings, as accounted for by the Comptroller, shall accrue to the General
9 Fund of the State.

10 (iii) The provisions of subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph do not
11 apply to the following funds:

12 212. the Department of Social and Economic Mobility Special
13 Fund; [and]

14 213. the Population Health Improvement Fund; **AND**

15 **214. THE DEED FRAUD PREVENTION GRANT FUND.**

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

17 (a) There is a Task Force to Study Deed Fraud.

18 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

19 (1) the Attorney General, or the Attorney General's designee;

20 (2) one representative of the Judiciary, designated by the Chief Justice of
21 the Supreme Court of Maryland;

22 (3) the Director of the State Department of Assessments and Taxation, or
23 the Director's designee;

24 (4) the Executive Director of the Maryland Legal Services Corporation, or
25 the Executive Director's designee;

26 (5) the Secretary of Housing and Community Development, or the
27 Secretary's designee; and

28 (6) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

29 (i) one representative of the land title insurance industry; and

- (ii) one individual with experience as a notary public.
- (c) The Governor shall designate the chair of the Task Force.
- (d) The Administrative Office of the Courts shall provide staff for the Task Force.
- (e) A member of the Task Force:
 - (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but
 - (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Regulations, as provided in the State budget.
- (f) The Task Force shall:
 - (1) study incidents of deed fraud in Maryland, including the number of fraud complaints, the number of resolved deed fraud cases, the amount of restitution paid, and geographic and demographic trends;
 - (2) study how deed fraud is combatted in other states;
 - (3) identify patterns used by perpetrators of deed fraud and patterns in demographics of victims of deed fraud;
 - (4) develop recommendations for deed fraud detection tools;
 - (5) conduct an analysis on victims of deed fraud that identifies the economic impact on victims; and
 - (6) make recommendations for combatting deed fraud in the State, including strategies for intergovernmental coordination to more effectively detect and prevent deed fraud.
- (g) On or before July 1, 2028, the Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article.