

HOUSE BILL 136

G2

6lr0699

(PRE-FILED)

By: **Delegate Vogel**

Requested: August 14, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Government, Labor, and Elections

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Maryland Public Ethics Law – Officials of the Legislative Branch – Gifts of Food**
3 **and Beverages**

4 FOR the purpose of altering an exemption that allows an official of the Legislative Branch
5 to accept a gift of food or beverages as part of a meal or reception to which a
6 legislative unit is invited to instead allow an official of the Legislative Branch to
7 accept a gift of food or beverages at a meal or reception to which all members of the
8 General Assembly are invited and that was open to the public; altering the written
9 invitation and registration report requirements a regulated lobbyist must meet if
10 inviting all members of the General Assembly to a meal or reception; requiring the
11 Department of Legislative Services to post on the General Assembly website certain
12 information regarding the meal or reception; and generally relating to officials of the
13 Legislative Branch and gifts of food and beverages.

14 BY repealing

15 Article – General Provisions
16 Section 5–101(w)
17 Annotated Code of Maryland
18 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

19 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

20 Article – General Provisions
21 Section 5–505(c)(1) and 5–705(a)
22 Annotated Code of Maryland
23 (2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

24 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

25 Article – General Provisions
26 Section 5–505(c)(2)(i), 5–607(a) and (e)(3), 5–705(b), and 5–709
27 Annotated Code of Maryland

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



(2019 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY renumbering

Article – General Provisions

Section 5–101(x) through (gg) and (gg–1)

to be Section 5–101(w) through (gg), respectively

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2019 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 – General Provisions

5–101.

[(w) “Legislative unit” means:

(1) the General Assembly;

(2) either house of the General Assembly;

(3) a standing committee of the General Assembly, provided that the
presiding officer of the House of Delegates and the presiding officer of the Senate shall be
deemed an ex officio member of any standing committee of the presiding officer’s chamber;
or

(4) a county or regional delegation of members of the General Assembly
that is recognized by a presiding officer of the General Assembly.]

5–505.

(c) (1) Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, an official or employee
may accept a gift listed in paragraph (2) of this subsection unless:

(i) the gift would tend to impair the impartiality and independent
judgment of the official or employee; or

(ii) as to a gift of significant value:

1. the gift would give the appearance of impairing the
impartiality and independent judgment of the official or employee; or

2. the official or employee believes or has reason to believe
that the gift is designed to impair the impartiality and independent judgment of the official
or employee.

(2) Subject to paragraph (1) of this subsection, subsection (b) of this section does not apply to:

(i) 1. except for officials of the Legislative Branch, meals or beverages received and consumed by the official or employee in the presence of the donor or sponsoring entity;

2. for officials of the Legislative Branch, food or beverages received and consumed by the official in the presence of the donor or sponsoring entity as part of a meal or reception:

A. to which all members of [a legislative unit] **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** were invited; **AND**

B. THAT WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC;

3. for a member of the General Assembly, food or beverages received from a donor or sponsoring entity, other than an individual regulated lobbyist described in § 5–702(a)(1) of this title, during a period when the General Assembly is not in session, at a location that is within a county that contains the member’s district, provided that the donor or sponsoring entity is located within a county that contains the member’s district; or

4. for a member of the General Assembly, food or beverages received at the time and geographic location of a meeting of a legislative organization for which the member’s presiding officer has approved the member’s attendance at State expense;

5–607.

(a) A **FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE** statement that is required under § 5–601(a) of this subtitle shall contain schedules disclosing the information and interests specified in this section, if known, for the individual making the statement for the applicable period.

(e) (3) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the schedule shall include each gift with a value of more than \$20 and each of two or more gifts with a cumulative value of \$100 or more received from one entity during the applicable period.

(ii) The **FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE** statement need not include as a gift:

1. food or beverages received and consumed by an official of the Legislative Branch in the presence of the donor or sponsoring entity as part of a meal or reception:

1 A. to which all members of [a legislative unit] **THE**
2 **GENERAL ASSEMBLY** were invited; AND

3 B. **THAT WAS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC;**

4 2. food or beverages received by a member of the General
5 Assembly at the time and geographic location of a meeting of a legislative organization for
6 which the member's presiding officer has approved the member's attendance at State
7 expense; or

8 3. except as provided in subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph,
9 a ticket or free admission extended to a member of the General Assembly by the person
10 sponsoring or conducting the event as a courtesy or ceremony to the office to attend a
11 charitable, cultural, or political event to which all members of [a legislative unit] **THE**
12 **GENERAL ASSEMBLY** were invited.

13 (iii) The **FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE** statement shall include the
14 acceptance of each of two or more tickets or free admissions, extended to a member of the
15 General Assembly by the person sponsoring or conducting the event, with a cumulative
16 value of \$100 or more received from one entity during the applicable period.

17 5-705.

18 (a) (1) A regulated lobbyist shall file electronically with the Ethics
19 Commission, under oath and for each registration, a separate report concerning the
20 regulated lobbyist's lobbying activities:

21 (i) by May 31 of each year, to cover the period from November 1 of
22 the previous year through April 30 of the current year; and

23 (ii) by November 30 of each year, to cover the period from May 1
24 through October 31 of that year.

25 (2) If the regulated lobbyist is not an individual, an authorized officer or
26 agent of the regulated lobbyist shall sign the report.

27 (3) If a prorated amount is reported as compensation, it shall be labeled as
28 prorated.

29 (b) A report required by this section shall include:

30 (1) a complete, current statement of the information required under §
31 5-704(b) of this subtitle;

32 (2) total expenditures in connection with influencing executive action or
33 legislative action in each of the following categories:

(i) total individual regulated lobbyist compensation, excluding expenses reported under this paragraph;

(ii) office expenses of the regulated lobbyist;

(iii) professional and technical research and assistance;

(iv) publications that expressly encourage communication with one or more officials or employees;

(v) witnesses, including the name of each and the fees and expenses paid to each;

(vi) except as otherwise reported under this paragraph, meals and beverages for officials, employees, or members of the immediate families of officials or employees;

(vii) except as provided in § 5–709(d)(2) of this subtitle, food, beverages, and incidental expenses for officials of the Legislative Branch for meals and receptions;

1. to which all members of [any legislative unit] **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** were invited; **AND**

2. THAT WERE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC;

(viii) food and beverages for members of the General Assembly at the times and geographic locations of meetings of legislative organizations, as allowed under § 5–505(c)(2)(i)4 of this title;

(ix) food, lodging, and scheduled entertainment for officials and employees at meetings at which the officials and employees were scheduled speakers or scheduled panel participants;

(x) tickets and free admission extended to members of the General Assembly, as a courtesy or ceremony to the office, to attend charitable, cultural, or political events sponsored or conducted by the reporting entity, as allowed under § 5–505(c)(2)(viii) of this title;

(xi) other gifts to or for officials, employees, or members of the immediate families of officials or employees; and

(xii) other expenses; and

(3) as to expenditures reported in item (2)(vii), (viii), (ix), and (x) of this subsection, the date, location, and total expense of the regulated lobbyist for each meal, reception, event, or meeting.

5–709.

(a) A regulated lobbyist who invites all members of [a legislative unit] **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY** to a meal or reception shall, at least [5] 14 days before the date of the meal or reception:

(1) extend a written invitation to all members of the [legislative unit] **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**; and

(2) register the meal or reception with the Department of Legislative Services by filing a report electronically as required by the Ethics Commission.

(b) A [legislative unit] registration report required under subsection (a) of this section shall include[:

(1)] the **TIME**, date, and location of the meal or reception[; and

(2) the name of the legislative unit invited].

(c) (1) [Based on information contained in a legislative unit] **WITHIN 1 BUSINESS DAY OF RECEIVING** A registration report filed under subsection (a) of this section, the Department of Legislative Services shall [publish once a week a list containing] **POST ON THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY WEBSITE** the **TIME**, date, and location of each upcoming meal or reception [and the name of the legislative unit invited] **AS DISCLOSED IN THE REPORT**.

(2) (i) The Department of Legislative Services shall allow public inspection of any [legislative unit] registration report required under this section during regular business hours.

(ii) The Department of Legislative Services shall maintain a photocopy or electronic copy of each registration report required under this section.

(d) (1) (i) A regulated lobbyist who is required to register under subsection (a) of this section shall report the total cost of the meal or reception, and the name of each sponsor who contributes to the cost and the amount of the contribution, to the Ethics Commission within 14 days after the date of the meal or reception.

(ii) If any information required under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph is not known within 14 days after the date of the meal or reception, the regulated lobbyist shall, as to the information not known, specify the nature and estimate the amount of each item.

1 (2) If all of the information required by paragraph (1)(i) of this subsection
2 is reported accurately and completely, the regulated lobbyist is not required to report the
3 cost of the meal or reception under § 5–705(b)(2)(vii) of this subtitle.

4 (3) The Ethics Commission shall allow public inspection of each
5 registration report required under this subsection during regular business hours.

6 (e) A report required under this section shall be filed electronically in the manner
7 required for reports filed under § 5–705 of this subtitle.

8 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That Section(s) 5–101(x) through
9 (gg) and (gg–1) of Article – General Provisions of the Annotated Code of Maryland be
10 renumbered to be Section(s) 5–101(w) through (gg), respectively.

11 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
12 October 1, 2026.