

# HOUSE BILL 596

N2, D3

6lr2640  
CF SB 250

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By: **Delegates Nkongolo, Behler, Chisholm, Griffith, and Odom**

Introduced and read first time: January 28, 2026

Assigned to: Judiciary

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

### 2 **Estates – Maryland Uniform Simultaneous Death Act**

3 FOR the purpose of conforming the Maryland Uniform Simultaneous Death Act to the  
4 Uniform Simultaneous Death Act; providing that a surviving individual who does  
5 not survive the death of another individual for a certain period of time is deemed to  
6 have predeceased the other individual for purposes relating to the inheritance of  
7 property; establishing evidentiary procedures for determining an individual's death  
8 or survival in certain circumstances; providing for liability under this Act in  
9 connection with the distribution of disputed assets; and generally relating to the  
10 Maryland Uniform Simultaneous Death Act.

11 BY renumbering

12 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings  
13 Section 10–806 and 10–807  
14 to be Section 10–808 and 10–809, respectively  
15 Annotated Code of Maryland  
16 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

17 BY repealing

18 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings  
19 Section 10–801 through 10–805  
20 Annotated Code of Maryland  
21 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

22 BY adding to

23 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings  
24 Section 10–801 through 10–807  
25 Annotated Code of Maryland  
26 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 That Section(s) 10-806 and 10-807 of Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings of the  
2 Annotated Code of Maryland be renumbered to be Section(s) 10-808 and 10-809,  
3 respectively.

4 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read  
5 as follows:

6 **Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings**

7 [10-801.

8 Where title to property or its devolution depends upon priority of death and there is  
9 no sufficient evidence that the persons have died otherwise than simultaneously, the  
10 property of each person shall be disposed of as if he had survived, except as provided  
11 otherwise in this subtitle.]

12 [10-802.

13 Where two or more beneficiaries are designated to take successively because of  
14 survivorship under another person's disposition of property and there is not sufficient  
15 evidence that these beneficiaries have died other than simultaneously, the property  
16 disposed of shall be divided into as many equal portions as there are successive  
17 beneficiaries, and these portions shall be distributed to those who would have taken in the  
18 event that each designated beneficiary had survived.]

19 [10-803.

20 Where there is no sufficient evidence that two joint tenants or tenants by the entirety  
21 have died other than simultaneously, the property held shall be distributed one half as if  
22 one had survived and one half as if the other had survived. If there are more than two joint  
23 tenants and all of them have so died, the property distributed shall be in the proportion  
24 that one bears to the whole number of joint tenants.]

25 [10-804.

26 Where the insured and the beneficiary in a policy of life or accident insurance have  
27 died and there is no sufficient evidence that they have died other than simultaneously, the  
28 proceeds of the policy shall be distributed as if the insured had survived the beneficiary.]

29 [10-805.

30 This subtitle shall not apply in the case of wills, living trusts, deeds, or contracts of  
31 insurance where provision has been made for distribution of property different from the  
32 provisions of this subtitle.]

33 **10-801.**

1                   (A) IN THIS SUBTITLE THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
2 INDICATED.

3                   (B) “CO-OWNER WITH RIGHT OF SURVIVORSHIP” INCLUDES:

4                   (1) A JOINT TENANT;

5                   (2) A TENANT BY THE ENTIRETY; AND

6                   (3) A CO-OWNER OF PROPERTY OR AN ACCOUNT THAT ENTITLES  
7 REMAINING CO-OWNERS TO THE WHOLE OF THE PROPERTY OR ACCOUNT ON THE  
8 DEATH OF ANOTHER.

9                   (C) (1) “GOVERNING INSTRUMENT” MEANS A DISPOSITIVE, APPOINTIVE,  
10 OR NOMINATIVE INSTRUMENT OF ANY TYPE.

11                   (2) “GOVERNING INSTRUMENT” INCLUDES:

12                   (I) AN ACCOUNT WITH A PAYABLE-ON-DEATH DESIGNATION;

13                   (II) A DEED;

14                   (III) AN INSURANCE OR ANNUITY POLICY;

15                   (IV) A POWER OF ATTORNEY;

16                   (V) A PENSION, OR A PROFIT-SHARING, RETIREMENT, OR  
17 SIMILAR BENEFIT PLAN;

18                   (VI) A TRUST;

19                   (VII) A WILL; AND

20                   (VIII) AN INSTRUMENT CREATING OR EXERCISING A POWER OF  
21 APPOINTMENT.

22                   (D) (1) “PAYOR” MEANS A PERSON WHO IS AUTHORIZED OR OBLIGATED  
23 BY LAW OR OTHER GOVERNING INSTRUMENT TO MAKE PAYMENTS.

24                   (2) “PAYOR” INCLUDES:

25                   (I) A TRUSTEE;

- 1 (II) AN INSURER;
- 2 (III) A BUSINESS ENTITY;
- 3 (IV) AN EMPLOYER; AND
- 4 (V) A GOVERNMENT OR A GOVERNMENT AGENCY, SUBDIVISION,
- 5 OR INSTRUMENTALITY.

6 **10-802.**

7 (A) THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY IF APPLICATION WILL RESULT IN  
8 ESCHEAT TO THE STATE UNDER § 3-105 OF THE ESTATES AND TRUSTS ARTICLE.

9 (B) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN § 10-806 OF THIS SUBTITLE, IF THE TITLE TO  
10 PROPERTY, THE DEVOLUTION OF PROPERTY, THE RIGHT TO ELECT AN INTEREST IN  
11 PROPERTY, OR THE RIGHT TO EXEMPT PROPERTY, HOMESTEAD, OR FAMILY  
12 ALLOWANCE DEPENDS ON AN INDIVIDUAL'S SURVIVORSHIP OF THE DEATH OF  
13 ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL, AN INDIVIDUAL WHO IS NOT ESTABLISHED BY CLEAR AND  
14 CONVINCING EVIDENCE TO HAVE SURVIVED THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL BY AT LEAST  
15 120 HOURS IS DEEMED TO HAVE PREDECEASED THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL.

16 **10-803.**

17 EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN § 10-806 OF THIS SUBTITLE, FOR PURPOSES OF A  
18 PROVISION OF A GOVERNING INSTRUMENT THAT RELATES TO AN INDIVIDUAL  
19 SURVIVING AN EVENT, INCLUDING THE DEATH OF ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL, AN  
20 INDIVIDUAL WHO IS NOT ESTABLISHED BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE TO  
21 HAVE SURVIVED THE EVENT BY AT LEAST 120 HOURS IS DEEMED TO HAVE  
22 PREDECEASED THE EVENT.

23 **10-804.**

24 (A) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN § 10-806 OF THIS SUBTITLE, IF IT IS NOT  
25 ESTABLISHED BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT ONE OF TWO  
26 CO-OWNERS WITH RIGHT OF SURVIVORSHIP SURVIVED THE OTHER CO-OWNER BY  
27 AT LEAST 120 HOURS:

28 (1) ONE-HALF OF THE PROPERTY SHALL PASS AS IF ONE CO-OWNER  
29 HAD SURVIVED BY AT LEAST 120 HOURS; AND

30 (2) ONE-HALF OF THE PROPERTY SHALL PASS AS IF THE OTHER

1 CO-OWNER HAD SURVIVED BY AT LEAST 120 HOURS.

2       (B) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN § 10-806 OF THIS SUBTITLE, IF THERE ARE  
3 MORE THAN TWO CO-OWNERS WITH RIGHT OF SURVIVORSHIP AND IT IS NOT  
4 ESTABLISHED BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT AT LEAST ONE OF THE  
5 CO-OWNERS SURVIVED THE OTHERS BY AT LEAST 120 HOURS, THE PROPERTY  
6 PASSES IN THE PROPORTION THAT ONE BEARS TO THE WHOLE NUMBER OF  
7 CO-OWNERS.

8 10-805.

9       (A) THIS SECTION APPLIES IN ADDITION TO THE RULES OF EVIDENCE.

10       (B) DEATH OCCURS WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL IS DETERMINED TO BE DEAD IN  
11 ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 5, SUBTITLE 2 OF THE HEALTH - GENERAL ARTICLE.

12       (C) (1) A CERTIFIED OR AUTHENTICATED COPY OF A DEATH  
13 CERTIFICATE ISSUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 4-212 OF THE HEALTH - GENERAL  
14 ARTICLE IS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF THE FACT, PLACE, DATE, AND TIME OF  
15 DEATH AND THE IDENTITY OF THE DECEDED.

16       (2) A CERTIFIED OR AUTHENTICATED COPY OF ANY RECORD OR  
17 REPORT BY A FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC GOVERNMENT AGENCY THAT AN INDIVIDUAL  
18 IS ALIVE, MISSING, DETAINED, OR DEAD IS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF THE STATUS,  
19 DATES, CIRCUMSTANCES, AND PLACES DISCLOSED BY THE RECORD OR REPORT.

20       (3) IN THE ABSENCE OF EVIDENCE DISPUTING THE TIME OF DEATH  
21 STATED ON A DOCUMENT DESCRIBED IN PARAGRAPH (1) OR (2) OF THIS  
22 SUBSECTION, A DOCUMENT THAT STATES A TIME OF DEATH AT LEAST 120 HOURS  
23 AFTER THE TIME OF DEATH OF ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL, REGARDLESS OF HOW THE  
24 TIME OF DEATH OF THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL IS DETERMINED, ESTABLISHES BY  
25 CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT THE INDIVIDUAL DESCRIBED SURVIVED  
26 THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL BY 120 HOURS.

27       (D) IN THE ABSENCE OF PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF DEATH UNDER  
28 SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION, THE FACT OF DEATH MAY BE ESTABLISHED BY  
29 CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE, INCLUDING CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

30       (E) (1) AN INDIVIDUAL WHOSE DEATH IS NOT ESTABLISHED UNDER  
31 SUBSECTION (C) OR (D) OF THIS SECTION IS PRESUMED TO BE DEAD WHEN:

32               (I) THE INDIVIDUAL HAS BEEN ENTIRELY ABSENT FOR A  
33 PERIOD OF 5 CONTINUOUS YEARS; AND

7 10-806.

8 IF THE TITLE TO PROPERTY, THE DEVOLUTION OF PROPERTY, THE RIGHT TO  
9 ELECT AN INTEREST IN PROPERTY, OR THE RIGHT TO EXEMPT PROPERTY,  
10 HOMESTEAD, OR FAMILY ALLOWANCE DEPENDS ON AN INDIVIDUAL SURVIVING AN  
11 EVENT, INCLUDING THE DEATH OF ANOTHER INDIVIDUAL, AN INDIVIDUAL IS NOT  
12 REQUIRED TO HAVE SURVIVED THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL BY AT LEAST 120 HOURS IF:

13 (1) THE GOVERNING INSTRUMENT CONTAINS APPLICABLE  
14 LANGUAGE DEALING EXPLICITLY WITH SIMULTANEOUS DEATHS OR DEATHS IN A  
15 COMMON DISASTER;

21 (3) THE GOVERNING INSTRUMENT EXPRESSLY REQUIRES THE  
22 INDIVIDUAL TO HAVE SURVIVED THE EVENT FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD OTHER THAN  
23 AT LEAST 120 HOURS:

1 10-807.

2 (A) (1) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A  
3 PAYOR OR OTHER THIRD PARTY IS NOT LIABLE FOR HAVING MADE A PAYMENT,  
4 TRANSFERRED AN ITEM OF PROPERTY, CONFERRED A BENEFIT, OR TAKEN ANY  
5 OTHER ACTION IN GOOD FAITH RELIANCE ON AN INDIVIDUAL'S APPARENT  
6 ENTITLEMENT UNDER THE TERMS OF A GOVERNING INSTRUMENT.

7 (2) A PAYOR OR THIRD PARTY IS LIABLE FOR PAYMENT MADE OR  
8 OTHER ACTION TAKEN AFTER THE PAYOR OR THIRD PARTY RECEIVED WRITTEN  
9 NOTICE OF A CLAIMED LACK OF ENTITLEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION  
10 (B) OF THIS SECTION.

11 (B) A WRITTEN NOTICE OF A CLAIMED LACK OF ENTITLEMENT SHALL BE:

12 (1) SENT BY REGISTERED OR CERTIFIED MAIL, INCLUDING PROOF OF  
13 DELIVERY, TO A PAYOR'S OR THIRD PARTY'S HOME OR WORK ADDRESS; OR

14 (2) SERVED ON THE PAYOR OR THIRD PARTY IN THE SAME MANNER  
15 AS A SUMMONS IN A CIVIL ACTION.

16 (C) (1) ON RECEIPT OF NOTICE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (B)  
17 OF THIS SECTION, A PAYOR OR THIRD PARTY MAY:

18 (I) IF PROBATE PROCEEDINGS HAVE COMMENCED, PAY ANY  
19 AMOUNT OWED OR TRANSFER OR DEPOSIT ANY ITEM OF PROPERTY HELD BY THE  
20 PAYOR OR THIRD PARTY TO OR WITH THE COURT HAVING JURISDICTION OF THE  
21 PROBATE PROCEEDINGS RELATED TO THE DECEDENT'S ESTATE; OR

22 (II) IF NO PROBATE PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEEN COMMENCED,  
23 PAY ANY AMOUNT OWED OR TRANSFER OR DEPOSIT ANY ITEM OF PROPERTY HELD  
24 BY THE PAYOR OR THIRD PARTY TO OR WITH THE COURT HAVING JURISDICTION OF  
25 PROBATE PROCEEDINGS RELATING TO DECEDENTS' ESTATES LOCATED IN THE  
26 COUNTY OF THE DECEDENT'S RESIDENCE.

27 (2) A COURT THAT HOLDS PROPERTY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS  
28 SUBSECTION SHALL ORDER DISBURSEMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH A  
29 DETERMINATION MADE UNDER THIS SUBTITLE.

30 (D) IF A PAYOR OR THIRD PARTY DISTRIBUTES ASSETS BASED ON APPARENT  
31 ENTITLEMENT:

**(1) THE RECIPIENT IS NOT LIABLE FOR OR OBLIGATED TO RETURN:**

2 (I) PROPERTY PURCHASED FOR VALUE, UNLESS THE  
3 PURCHASER HAD NOTICE OF A DISPUTE REGARDING ENTITLEMENT TO THE  
4 PROPERTY; OR

5 (II) A PAYMENT, AN ITEM OF PROPERTY, OR A BENEFIT  
6 RECEIVED IN PARTIAL OR FULL OBLIGATION OF A LEGALLY ENFORCEABLE  
7 OBLIGATION; AND

11 (I) NOT-FOR-VALUE; OR

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