

SENATE BILL 140

E1

(6lr0931)

ENROLLED BILL

— *Judicial Proceedings/Judiciary* —

Introduced by **Senator West**

Read and Examined by Proofreaders:

Proofreader.

Proofreader.

Sealed with the Great Seal and presented to the Governor, for his approval this

_____ day of _____ at _____ o'clock, _____ M.

President.

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation**

3 FOR the purpose of prohibiting a person from knowingly recruiting, harboring,
4 transporting, or obtaining an individual for the purpose of appropriating the
5 government benefits of an individual for the benefit of the person or another by
6 certain means; prohibiting a person from knowingly benefitting in a certain manner
7 from participation in a venture that violates a certain provision of this Act;
8 prohibiting a person from aiding, abetting, or conspiring with one or more persons to
9 violate a certain provision of this Act; and generally relating to benefits exploitation.

10 BY adding to

11 Article – Criminal Law

12 Section 8–524

13 Annotated Code of Maryland

14 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.

Italics indicate opposite chamber/conference committee amendments.



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

3 **Article – Criminal Law**

4 **8-524.**

5 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
6 INDICATED.

7 (2) “COERCION” MEANS:

8 (I) 1. CAUSING OR THREATENING TO CAUSE BODILY HARM
9 TO AN INDIVIDUAL; OR

10 2. PHYSICALLY RESTRAINING OR CONFINING OR
11 THREATENING TO PHYSICALLY RESTRAIN OR CONFINE AN INDIVIDUAL;

12 (II) EXPOSING OR DISSEMINATING OR THREATENING TO
13 EXPOSE OR DISSEMINATE ANY FACT OR INFORMATION THAT WOULD TEND TO
14 SUBJECT AN INDIVIDUAL TO CRIMINAL OR IMMIGRATION PROCEEDINGS, HATRED,
15 CONTEMPT, OR RIDICULE;

16 (III) DESTROYING, CONCEALING, REMOVING, CONFISCATING, OR
17 POSSESSING ANY ACTUAL OR PURPORTED PASSPORT OR OTHER IMMIGRATION
18 DOCUMENT, OR ANY OTHER ACTUAL OR PURPORTED GOVERNMENT IDENTIFICATION
19 DOCUMENT, OF AN INDIVIDUAL;

20 (IV) PROVIDING A CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE TO AN
21 INDIVIDUAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMPELLING THE INDIVIDUAL TO ENGAGE IN AN
22 ACTION AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL’S WILL;

23 (V) CAUSING OR THREATENING TO CAUSE FINANCIAL HARM TO
24 AN INDIVIDUAL OR EXERTING FINANCIAL CONTROL OVER A DISABLED OR ELDERLY
25 ADULT; OR

26 (VI) DEPRIVING AN INDIVIDUAL OF MEDICAL CARE.

27 (3) “CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE” HAS THE MEANING
28 STATED IN § 5-101 OF THIS ARTICLE.

29 (4) “DECEPTION” MEANS:

1 (I) CREATING OR CONFIRMING ANOTHER PERSON'S
2 IMPRESSION OF AN EXISTING FACT OR PAST EVENT THAT IS FALSE AND THAT THE
3 ACCUSED KNOWS OR BELIEVES TO BE FALSE; OR

4 (II) PROMISING BENEFITS OR THE PERFORMANCE OF SERVICES
5 THAT THE ACCUSED DOES NOT INTEND TO DELIVER OR PERFORM OR KNOWS WILL
6 NOT BE DELIVERED OR PERFORMED.

7 (5) "EXPLOITATION" MEANS ILLEGALLY OR IMPROPERLY USING AN
8 INDIVIDUAL OR AN INDIVIDUAL'S GOVERNMENT BENEFITS THROUGH UNDUE
9 INFLUENCE, HARASSMENT, DURESS, FALSE REPRESENTATION, FALSE PRETENSE,
10 OR OTHER SIMILAR MEANS FOR PERSONAL PROFIT OR ADVANTAGE OR FOR THE
11 PROFIT OR ADVANTAGE OF ANOTHER.

12 (6) "GOVERNMENT BENEFITS" INCLUDES:

13 (I) MEDICARE BENEFITS;

14 (II) MEDICAID BENEFITS;

15 (III) TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
16 BENEFITS;

17 (IV) SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR
18 WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC) BENEFITS;

19 (V) SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
20 (SNAP) BENEFITS;

21 (VI) SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS;

22 (VII) SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY (SSDI) BENEFITS;

23 (VIII) VETERANS BENEFITS;

24 (IX) PENSION BENEFITS;

25 (X) TEMPORARY DISABILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TDAP)
26 BENEFITS; AND

27 (XI) PUBLIC ASSISTANCE TO ADULTS (PAA) BENEFITS.

28 (7) "ISOLATION" MEANS PREVENTING AN INDIVIDUAL FROM HAVING
29 CONTACT WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY, A WELFARE AGENCY, LAW ENFORCEMENT

1 OFFICERS, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS OR ENTITIES
2 WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIVIDUAL OR AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL'S
3 WISHES.

4 (B) (1) A PERSON MAY NOT, THROUGH DECEPTION, COERCION,
5 EXPLOITATION, ~~ISOLATION, OR ANY OTHER MEANS~~ OR ISOLATION, KNOWINGLY
6 RECRUIT, HARBOR, TRANSPORT, OR OBTAIN AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF
7 APPROPRIATING THE GOVERNMENT BENEFITS OF AN INDIVIDUAL FOR PERSONAL
8 BENEFIT OR TO BENEFIT ANOTHER.

9 (2) A PERSON MAY NOT KNOWINGLY BENEFIT FINANCIALLY OR BY
10 RECEIVING ANYTHING OF VALUE FROM PARTICIPATION IN A VENTURE THAT
11 VIOLATES PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

12 (3) A PERSON MAY NOT AID, ABET, OR CONSPIRE WITH ONE OR MORE
13 PERSONS TO VIOLATE PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION.

14 (C) ~~A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY~~
15 ~~OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING~~
16 ~~25 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$15,000 OR BOTH~~

17 (1) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE MONEY OR OTHER GOODS OR
18 SERVICES GOVERNMENT BENEFITS INVOLVED IS LESS THAN \$1,500, A PERSON WHO
19 VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON
20 CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 1 YEAR OR A FINE NOT
21 EXCEEDING \$500 OR BOTH.

22 (2) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE MONEY OR OTHER GOODS OR
23 SERVICES GOVERNMENT BENEFITS INVOLVED IS AT LEAST \$1,500 BUT LESS THAN
24 \$25,000, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A
25 FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 5
26 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$10,000 OR BOTH.

27 (3) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE MONEY OR OTHER GOODS OR
28 SERVICES GOVERNMENT BENEFITS INVOLVED IS AT LEAST \$25,000, BUT LESS THAN
29 \$100,000, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A
30 FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 10
31 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$15,000 OR BOTH.

32 (4) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE MONEY OR OTHER GOODS OR
33 SERVICES GOVERNMENT BENEFITS INVOLVED IS \$100,000 OR MORE, A PERSON WHO
34 VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY AND ON
35 CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 20 YEARS OR A FINE
36 NOT EXCEEDING \$25,000 OR BOTH.

1 **(D) (1) EACH VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE CONSIDERED A**
2 **SEPARATE OFFENSE.**

3 **(2) A SENTENCE IMPOSED UNDER THIS SECTION MAY BE SEPARATE**
4 **FROM AND CONSECUTIVE TO OR CONCURRENT WITH A SENTENCE FOR ANY CRIME**
5 **BASED ON THE ACT ESTABLISHING THE VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION.**

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

Approved:

Governor.

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.