

SENATE BILL 514

E1
HB 544/25 – JUD

6lr2454
CF 6lr2453

By: **Senator Smith**

Introduced and read first time: February 2, 2026

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Criminal Law – Third-Degree Assault**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing that it is a misdemeanor to intentionally cause offensive
4 contact, engage in conduct tending to put another in fear of offensive contact, or
5 attempt to cause offensive contact; altering a certain list of convictions that are
6 eligible for expungement under certain circumstances; and generally relating to
7 assault.

8 BY adding to
9 Article – Criminal Law
10 Section 3–203.1
11 Annotated Code of Maryland
12 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

13 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
14 Article – Criminal Law
15 Section 3–206 and 3–209
16 Annotated Code of Maryland
17 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

18 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
19 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings
20 Section 4–301(b) and 4–302(d)
21 Annotated Code of Maryland
22 (2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

23 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
24 Article – Criminal Procedure
25 Section 10–110(a)(1)(vii)
26 Annotated Code of Maryland
27 (2025 Replacement Volume)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



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

Article – Criminal Law

3–203.1.

(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION, “OFFENSIVE CONTACT” MEANS
NONCONSENSUAL PHYSICAL CONTACT THAT A REASONABLE PERSON WOULD FIND
TO BE OFFENSIVE.

(2) “OFFENSIVE CONTACT” DOES NOT INCLUDE:

(I) CONTACT THAT RESULTS IN PHYSICAL INJURY;

(II) CONTACT THAT CAUSES A RISK OF SERIOUS PHYSICAL
INJURY;

(III) A DOMESTICALLY RELATED CRIME, AS DEFINED IN § 6–233
OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ARTICLE; OR

(IV) A SEXUAL CRIME UNDER SUBTITLE 3 OF THIS TITLE.

(B) A PERSON MAY NOT:

(1) INTENTIONALLY CAUSE OFFENSIVE CONTACT;

(2) ENGAGE IN CONDUCT INTENDING TO PUT ANOTHER IN FEAR OF
OFFENSIVE CONTACT; OR

(3) ATTEMPT TO CAUSE OFFENSIVE CONTACT.

(C) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF THE
MISDEMEANOR OF ASSAULT IN THE THIRD DEGREE AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT
TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 90 DAYS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$500 OR
BOTH.

3–206.

(a) An indictment, information, other charging document, or warrant for a crime
described in § 3–202, § 3–203, or § 3–205 of this subtitle is sufficient if it substantially
states:

“(name of defendant) on (date) in (county) assaulted (name of victim) in the..... degree or (describe other violation) in violation of (section violated) against the peace, government, and dignity of the State.”.

(b) If the general form of indictment or information described in subsection (a) of this section is used to charge a crime described in § 3–202, § 3–203, or § 3–205 of this subtitle in a case in the circuit court, the defendant, on timely demand, is entitled to a bill of particulars.

(c) A charge of assault in the first degree also charges a defendant with assault in the second degree.

(D) (1) UNLESS SPECIFICALLY CHARGED BY THE STATE, ASSAULT IN THE THIRD DEGREE UNDER § 3–203.1 OF THIS SUBTITLE IS NOT A LESSER INCLUDED CRIME OF ANY OTHER CRIME.

(2) A CHARGING DOCUMENT OR WARRANT FOR A CRIME DESCRIBED IN § 3–203.1 OF THIS SUBTITLE IS SUFFICIENT IF IT SUBSTANTIALLY STATES:

“(NAME OF DEFENDANT) ON (DATE) IN (COUNTY) COMMITTED ASSAULT IN THE THIRD DEGREE AGAINST (NAME OF VICTIM) IN VIOLATION OF § 3–203.1 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW ARTICLE AGAINST THE PEACE, GOVERNMENT, AND DIGNITY OF THE STATE.”.

[(d)] (E) (1) To be found guilty of reckless endangerment under § 3–204 of this subtitle, a defendant must be charged specifically with reckless endangerment.

(2) A charging document for reckless endangerment under § 3–204 of this subtitle is sufficient if it substantially states:

“(name of defendant) on (date) in (county) committed reckless endangerment in violation of § 3–204 of the Criminal Law Article against the peace, government, and dignity of the State.”.

(3) If more than one individual is endangered by the conduct of the defendant, a separate charge may be brought for each individual endangered.

(4) A charging document containing a charge of reckless endangerment under § 3–204 of this subtitle may:

(i) include a count for each individual endangered by the conduct of the defendant; or

(ii) contain a single count based on the conduct of the defendant, regardless of the number of individuals endangered by the conduct of the defendant.

(5) If the general form of charging document described in paragraph (2) of this subsection is used to charge reckless endangerment under § 3–204 of this subtitle in a case in the circuit court, the defendant, on timely demand, is entitled to a bill of particulars.

3–209.

(a) Subject to [subsection] **SUBSECTIONS (b) AND (C)** of this section, a person charged with a crime under § 3–202, § 3–203, **§ 3–203.1**, § 3–204, or § 3–205 of this subtitle may assert any judicially recognized defense.

(b) The discovery or perception of, or belief about, another person's race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or disability, whether or not accurate, is not a defense to the crime of assault in any degree.

(C) A PHYSICAL INJURY OF A VICTIM RESULTING FROM A VIOLATION OF § 3–203.1 OF THIS SUBTITLE IS NOT A DEFENSE TO A CHARGE UNDER § 3–203.1 OF THIS SUBTITLE.

Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings

4–301.

(b) Except as provided in § 4–302 of this subtitle, the District Court also has exclusive original jurisdiction in a criminal case in which a person at least 18 years old or a corporation is charged with:

(1) Commission of a common-law or statutory misdemeanor regardless of the amount of money or value of the property involved;

(2) Violation of § 7–104, § 7–105, § 7–107, or § 7–108 of the Criminal Law Article, whether a felony or a misdemeanor;

(3) Violation of a county, municipal, or other ordinance, if the violation is not a felony;

(4) Criminal violation of a State, county, or municipal rule or regulation, if the violation is not a felony;

(5) Doing or omitting to do any act made punishable by a fine, imprisonment, or other penalty as provided by the particular law, ordinance, rule, or regulation defining the violation if the violation is not a felony;

(6) Violation of § 8–103 of the Criminal Law Article, whether a felony or a misdemeanor;

(7) Violation of § 8–203, § 8–204, § 8–205, § 8–206, § 8–207, § 8–208, or § 8–209 of the Criminal Law Article, whether a felony or misdemeanor;

(8) Forgery or violation of Title 8, Subtitle 6 of the Criminal Law Article, whether a felony or misdemeanor;

(9) Violation of Title 27, Subtitle 4 of the Insurance Article, whether a felony or a misdemeanor;

(10) Violation of § 9–1106 of the Labor and Employment Article;

(11) Violation of § 8–301 of the Criminal Law Article, whether a felony or misdemeanor;

(12) Violation of § 2–209 of the Criminal Law Article;

(13) Violation of Title 2, Subtitle 5 of the Criminal Law Article;

(14) Violation of Title 11, Subtitle 5 of the Financial Institutions Article;

(15) Violation of § 10–604, § 10–605, § 10–606, § 10–607, § 10–607.1, or § 10–608 of the Criminal Law Article, whether a felony or misdemeanor;

(16) Violation of Title 7, Subtitle 3, Part III of the Criminal Law Article, whether a felony or misdemeanor;

(17) Violation of § 20–102 of the Transportation Article, whether a felony or misdemeanor;

(18) Violation of § 8–801 of the Criminal Law Article;

(19) Violation of § 8–604 of the Criminal Law Article;

(20) Violation of Title 8, Subtitle 2, Part II of the Criminal Law Article;

(21) Violation of § 16–801, § 16–802, § 16–803, or § 16–804 of the Election Law Article;

(22) Violation of § 3–203(c) of the Criminal Law Article;

(23) Violation of § 11–208 of the Criminal Law Article as a second or subsequent offense;

(24) Violation of § 11–721 of the Criminal Procedure Article as a second or subsequent offense; [or]

(25) Violation of § 3–1102(b) or § 3–1103 of the Criminal Law Article; **OR**

(26) VIOLATION OF § 3–203.1 OF THE CRIMINAL LAW ARTICLE.

1 4–302.

2 (d) (1) Except as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection, the jurisdiction
3 of the District Court is concurrent with that of the circuit court in a criminal case:

4 (i) In which the penalty may be confinement for 3 years or more or
5 a fine of \$2,500 or more; or

6 (ii) That is a felony, as provided in § 4–301(b)(2), (6), (7), (8), (9), (10),
7 (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), (16), (17), (18), (19), (20), (21), (22), (23), (24), and (25) of this
8 subtitle.

9 (2) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, a
10 circuit court does not have jurisdiction to try a case charging a violation of **§ 3–203.1**, §
11 5–601, or § 5–620 of the Criminal Law Article.

12 (ii) A circuit court does have jurisdiction to try a case charging a
13 violation of **§ 3–203.1**, § 5–601, or § 5–620 of the Criminal Law Article if the defendant:

14 1. Properly demands a jury trial;

15 2. Appeals as provided by law from a final judgment entered
16 in the District Court; or

17 3. Is charged with another offense arising out of the same
18 circumstances that is within a circuit court's jurisdiction.

19 Article – Criminal Procedure

20 10–110.

21 (a) A person may file a petition listing relevant facts for expungement of a police
22 record, court record, or other record maintained by the State or a political subdivision of
23 the State if the person is convicted of:

24 (1) a misdemeanor that is a violation of:

25 (vii) § 3–203, **§ 3–203.1**, or § 3–808 of the Criminal Law Article;

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