

HOUSE BILL 906

D3
HB 1099/25 – JUD

6lr3128

By: **Delegates Moon and Barnes**

Introduced and read first time: February 5, 2026

Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

Civil Actions – Punitive Damage Awards – Surcharge

FOR the purpose of providing that punitive damages may be awarded in a civil action only if the plaintiff proves by clear and convincing evidence that the defendant acted with gross negligence; requiring the State Court Administrator to assess a certain surcharge on a defendant against whom a judgment for punitive damages is entered; prohibiting a jury from being informed of the surcharge on punitive damages that a defendant is required to pay; requiring the surcharge to be assessed at a certain time; requiring the Administrator to deposit money collected from the surcharge into the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Fund; and generally relating to punitive damage awards.

BY adding to

Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings
Section 11–113
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2020 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – Education
Section 5–206(a) and (b)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article – Education
Section 5–206(f)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings

11–113.

(A) IN THIS SECTION, “GROSS NEGLIGENCE” MEANS DISREGARD FOR THE RIGHTS OR SAFETY OF OTHERS, INCLUDING THE PUBLIC AT LARGE, THAT:

**(1) THE ACTOR KNOWS OR SHOULD KNOW IS LIKELY TO CAUSE HARM;
AND**

(2) IS CHARACTERIZED BY:

(I) A FAILURE TO EXERCISE EVEN SLIGHT CARE;

(II) WILLFUL, WANTON, OR OUTRAGEOUS MISCONDUCT;

(III) A PATTERN OF REPEATED MISCONDUCT;

(IV) MALICIOUS, OPPRESSIVE, OR FRAUDULENT INTENT;

(V) ACTS OR OMISSIONS THAT CREATE A HIGH DEGREE OF RISK OR HARM TO OTHERS; OR

(VI) CONDUCT THAT DEMONSTRATES INDIFFERENCE TO LEGAL OBLIGATIONS OR THE CONSEQUENCES OF MISCONDUCT.

(B) PUNITIVE DAMAGES MAY BE AWARDED IN A CIVIL ACTION ALLEGING NEGLIGENCE ONLY IF THE PLAINTIFF PROVES BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT THE DEFENDANT ACTED WITH GROSS NEGLIGENCE.

(C) THE STATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR SHALL ASSESS A SURCHARGE ON PUNITIVE DAMAGES IN AN AMOUNT EQUAL TO 50% OF AN AWARD OF PUNITIVE DAMAGES THAT SHALL BE:

(1) PAID BY THE DEFENDANT AGAINST WHOM THE JUDGMENT FOR PUNITIVE DAMAGES IS ENTERED; AND

(2) DEPOSITED INTO THE BLUEPRINT FOR MARYLAND’S FUTURE FUND UNDER § 5–206 OF THE EDUCATION ARTICLE.

(D) (1) THE SURCHARGE ON PUNITIVE DAMAGES UNDER SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION:

(I) IS AN ADDITIONAL PAYMENT THAT A DEFENDANT SHALL MAKE TO THE STATE THAT MAY NOT IN ANY WAY IMPACT THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF PUNITIVE DAMAGES A DEFENDANT IS ORDERED TO PAY A PLAINTIFF; AND

(II) MAY NOT BE CONSTRUED TO PENALIZE A PLAINTIFF WHO HAS BEEN AWARDED PUNITIVE DAMAGES.

(2) A JURY MAY NOT BE INFORMED OF THE SURCHARGE ON PUNITIVE DAMAGES THAT A DEFENDANT IS REQUIRED TO PAY UNDER SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION.

(3) THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF THE SURCHARGE ON A PUNITIVE DAMAGES AWARD THAT A DEFENDANT IS REQUIRED TO PAY SHALL BE ASSESSED AT THE CONCLUSION OF ALL PROCEEDINGS RELATING TO THE CIVIL ACTION.

Article – Education

5–206.

(a) In this section, “Fund” means the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Fund.

(b) There is the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future Fund.

(f) The Fund consists of:

(1) Revenue distributed to the Fund under **§ 11–113 OF THE COURTS ARTICLE**, Title 9, Subtitles 1D and 1E of the State Government Article, and §§ 2–4A–02, 2–605.1, and 2–1303 of the Tax – General Article;

(2) Money appropriated in the State budget for the Fund;

(3) Interest earned by the Academic Excellence Fund established under § 6–1105 of this article; and

(4) Any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the Fund.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That it is the intent of the General Assembly that this Act be applied and interpreted to abrogate the holding establishing the punitive damages criteria in *Owens–Illinois, Inc. v. Zenobia*, 325 Md. 420 (1992).

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall be construed to apply only prospectively and may not be applied or interpreted to have any effect on or application to any action for punitive damages filed before the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 4. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2026.