

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee

From: Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA)  
Shaoli Katana, Esq., Director

Subject: House Bill 693 - Courts - Surcharges and Payment to Special Funds

Date: February 14, 2022

Position: Support

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The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) joins its partner, the Maryland Access to Justice Commission, and supports **House Bill 693 - Courts - Surcharges and Payment to Special Funds**. House Bill 693 increases certain surcharges on certain fees, charges, and costs in certain civil cases in the circuit courts and the District Court; requires that certain surcharges collected be deposited into the Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund and directed to certain special funds in the State; establishes the Rental Assistance Special Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund; and requires interest earnings of the Rental Assistance Special Fund to be credited to the Rental Assistance Special Fund.

MSBA represents more attorneys than any other organization across the State in all practice areas. MSBA serves as the voice of Maryland's legal profession. Through its Laws Committee and various practice-specific sections, MSBA monitors and takes positions on legislation of importance to the legal profession.

MSBA supports access to justice for Marylanders and funding of the justice system. Since the start of COVID-19, A2JC, MSBA, and justice partners worked hard to secure emergency funding to make up for the 70% decline in civil legal aid funding. During the 2021 legislative session, we successfully advocated for \$9 million to the Maryland Legal Services Corporation to fund a diversity of civil legal aid programs through the state. In 2020, through the work of the COVID-19 Task Force, we succeeded in advocating for \$11.7 million in funding from Governor Hogan and Attorney General Frosh.

MSBA and its partner the Access to Justice Commission recently supported and secured the passage of the legal right to counsel in eviction matters, to help many Maryland renters negatively impacted by the pandemic. HB 693 takes the next step to implement the program

through much-needed funding for the Access to Counsel in Evictions Special Fund, as well as the Rental Assistance Special Fund, and to Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund.

For the reasons stated above, MSBA **supports** HB 693 and respectfully requests a **favorable report**. For additional information, please feel free to contact Shaoli Katana at MSBA at [shaoli@msba.org](mailto:shaoli@msba.org).