

# SENATE BILL 140

E1  
SB 170/25 – JPR

(PRE-FILED)

6lr0931  
CF HB 216

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By: **Senator West**

Requested: September 23, 2025

Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

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## A BILL ENTITLED

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)

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

16 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

17 **Article – Criminal Law**

18 **8–524.**

19 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
20 INDICATED.

21 (2) “COERCION” MEANS:

2 REPRINT OF SENATE BILL 140 as amended by SB0140/683623/1 01/19/26 at 7:14 PM

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

3 2. PHYSICALLY RESTRAINING OR CONFINING OR  
4 THREATENING TO PHYSICALLY RESTRAIN OR CONFINED AN INDIVIDUAL;

5 (II) EXPOSING OR DISSEMINATING OR THREATENING TO  
6 EXPOSE OR DISSEMINATE ANY FACT OR INFORMATION THAT WOULD TEND TO  
7 SUBJECT AN INDIVIDUAL TO CRIMINAL OR IMMIGRATION PROCEEDINGS, HATRED,  
8 CONTEMPT, OR RIDICULE;

9 (III) DESTROYING, CONCEALING, REMOVING, CONFISCATING, OR  
10 POSSESSING ANY ACTUAL OR PURPORTED PASSPORT OR OTHER IMMIGRATION  
11 DOCUMENT, OR ANY OTHER ACTUAL OR PURPORTED GOVERNMENT IDENTIFICATION  
12 DOCUMENT, OF AN INDIVIDUAL;

13 (IV) PROVIDING A CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE TO AN  
14 INDIVIDUAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMPELLING THE INDIVIDUAL TO ENGAGE IN AN  
15 ACTION AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL'S WILL;

16 (V) CAUSING OR THREATENING TO CAUSE FINANCIAL HARM TO  
17 AN INDIVIDUAL OR EXERTING FINANCIAL CONTROL OVER A DISABLED OR ELDERLY  
18 ADULT; OR

19 (VI) DEPRIVING AN INDIVIDUAL OF MEDICAL CARE.

20 (3) "CONTROLLED DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE" HAS THE MEANING  
21 STATED IN § 5-101 OF THIS ARTICLE.

22 (4) "DECEPTION" MEANS:

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

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

29 (5) "EXPLOITATION" MEANS ILLEGALLY OR IMPROPERLY USING AN  
30 INDIVIDUAL OR AN INDIVIDUAL'S GOVERNMENT BENEFITS THROUGH UNDUE  
31 INFLUENCE, HARASSMENT, DURESS, FALSE REPRESENTATION, FALSE PRETENSE,  
32 OR OTHER SIMILAR MEANS FOR PERSONAL PROFIT OR ADVANTAGE OR FOR THE  
33 PROFIT OR ADVANTAGE OF ANOTHER.

1 (6) "GOVERNMENT BENEFITS" INCLUDES:

2 (I) MEDICARE BENEFITS;

3 (II) MEDICAID BENEFITS;

4 (III) TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)  
5 BENEFITS;

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

8 (V) SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
9 (SNAP) BENEFITS;

10 (VI) SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS;

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

12 (VIII) VETERANS BENEFITS;

13 (IX) PENSION BENEFITS;

14 (X) TEMPORARY DISABILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TDAP)  
15 BENEFITS; AND

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

17 (7) "ISOLATION" MEANS PREVENTING AN INDIVIDUAL FROM HAVING  
18 CONTACT WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY, A WELFARE AGENCY, LAW ENFORCEMENT  
19 OFFICERS, HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, OR OTHER INDIVIDUALS OR ENTITIES  
20 WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDIVIDUAL OR AGAINST THE INDIVIDUAL'S  
21 WISHES.

22 (B) (1) A PERSON MAY NOT, THROUGH DECEPTION, COERCION,  
23 EXPLOITATION, ISOLATION, OR ANY OTHER MEANS, KNOWINGLY RECRUIT, HARBOR,  
24 TRANSPORT, OR OBTAIN AN INDIVIDUAL FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPROPRIATING THE  
25 GOVERNMENT BENEFITS OF AN INDIVIDUAL FOR PERSONAL BENEFIT OR TO  
26 BENEFIT ANOTHER.

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

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

3 (C) ~~A PERSON WHO VIOLATES SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY~~  
4 ~~OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING~~  
5 ~~25 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$15,000 OR BOTH~~

(1) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE MONEY OR OTHER GOODS OR SERVICES INVOLVED IS LESS THAN \$5,000, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 1 YEAR OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$5,000 OR BOTH;

(2) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE MONEY OR OTHER GOODS OR SERVICES INVOLVED IS AT LEAST \$5,000 BUT LESS THAN \$25,000, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 3 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$10,000 OR BOTH;

(3) IF THE AGGREGATE VALUE OF THE MONEY OR OTHER GOODS OR SERVICES INVOLVED IS \$25,000 OR MORE, A PERSON WHO VIOLATES A PROVISION OF THIS SECTION IS GUILTY OF A FELONY AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO IMPRISONMENT NOT EXCEEDING 10 YEARS OR A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$15,000 OR BOTH.

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

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

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