



PEOPLE'S GUIDE

2026 MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE SESSION





THE PLAYERS & THE PURPOSE

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION (A2JC)

The Maryland Access to Justice Commission is an independent entity that unites leaders to drive reforms and innovations in the civil justice system to make it accessible, equitable and fair for all Marylanders. A2JC is powered by the Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA). See our Impact Statement [HERE](#).

A2JC's PUBLIC INTEREST LAW COMMITTEE (PILC)

The Public Interest Law Committee (PILC), which was formerly the MSBA Delivery of Legal Services Section, is now aligned with the Maryland Access to Justice Commission within the MSBA. PILC is the home of public interest attorneys and advocates in MD. Whether working in private practice, judiciary, government or a civil legal aid organization, PILC welcomes MSBA members who are passionate about public interest law and about creating an accessible, equitable and just legal system. PILC builds community, develops compelling content, curates thought-provoking programming and advocates for justice and fairness. All MSBA members can join PILC for free.

PILC is chaired by Meredith Girard from Shore Legal Access and supported by A2JC and MSBA. It works through two committees: the Content Committee, which is co-chaired by Steven Kappen and Lisa Sarro; and the Community Building Committee, which is co-chaired by Shannnice Anderson and James Bell. We thank the leadership of PILC and its members who contributed their time, ideas and energy to make this year impactful. We look forward to having more people involved so we can do more together!

THE PURPOSE OF THIS PUBLICATION

This “People’s Guide” is our community’s first effort to create a plain language guide for everyday Marylanders that explains the most significant laws passed during the 2026 legislative session that impact low, modest-income or otherwise vulnerable Marylanders.

This publication also showcases the impact of the access to justice community’s collective advocacy in a broad range of subject areas. When brought together, the impact is both undeniable and impressive. In addition representing clients in court and at hearings, the access to justice community tracks hundreds of bills and carries client stories and experiences to the legislature and beyond to improve laws to make justice accessible for *all* Marylanders.



MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW COMMITTEE

ACCESS TO A LAWYER



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



Real Property - Access to Counsel in Evictions Program – Expansion SB 729

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law expands a special program that gives legal help to people who may be evicted from their homes. The program now includes people living in mobile home parks. When a landlord tries to evict someone from a mobile home, this law makes sure that person can get a lawyer to protect their rights.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, people living in mobile home parks did not always have the same protections as people living in houses or apartments. Many people living in mobile homes were losing their homes and could not afford a lawyer to help them. This law makes sure that anyone facing eviction who cannot afford a lawyer, can access one.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

People who live in mobile home parks can now get a free lawyer through the Access to Counsel in Evictions Program if they are in danger of losing their home.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

The new law helps Marylanders by making sure that families living in mobile home parks are treated like other tenants and they have the same protections as other tenants do. This law will help prevent mobile home park residents from being evicted because they will now have access to lawyers in eviction cases like other tenants do.

CONSUMER PROTECTION



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



Commercial Law - Earned Wage Access - Revisions

SB 94

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law changes the rules for companies that let you get your paycheck money before your payday (these are called “earned wage access services”). The main goal of the law is to stop these companies from asking for or taking tips. This helps workers keep more of the money they earn.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, some companies were pressuring people to give "optional tips." This was a way to charge extra money to people who needed their pay early. Companies sometimes tricked people into thinking that they had to pay this extra money to get their paycheck early. Other times, people faced hidden fees or found that their credit scores were hurt if they did not pay a tip. This law was passed to make these services fair so that workers do not have to pay extra just to get money they have already earned.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law creates several important rules to protect consumers and workers:

- **No More Tips:** Companies are not allowed to ask for or take tips or donations from customers. They cannot pressure customers to pay tips by charging late fees, interest, or other penalties if a customer does not pay a tip.
- **Faster Refunds:** If a company gets a tip by mistake, they must give the full amount back to the customer within 7 days.
- **Free Options:** Any company that lets you get your wages early must offer at least one way to get that money for free and clearly explain how to use that free option.
- **Bank Fee Protection:** If a company tries to take a payment from your bank and causes a fee for spending too much money (known as an “overdraft fee”), the company must pay you back for that fee within five business days.
- **Closing Loopholes:** Companies cannot force you to pay tips by suing you, telling your bank that you didn’t pay a tip (which could hurt your credit score), or hiring debt collectors to get tips from you.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This new law helps Marylanders by making sure that getting your paycheck early doesn't lead to extra costs or legal trouble. It protects people from being pressured into paying "tips" for a service that should be straightforward. By requiring free options and protecting residents from bank fees and bad credit reports, the law ensures that financial tools meant to help people don't end up hurting them.

Protection From Predatory Pricing Act

HB 895

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The Protection From Predatory Pricing Act stops big food stores and delivery apps from using your private information to charge you higher prices than other people. This ensures that prices are the same for everyone.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, new technology let stores use "dynamic pricing." This let stores and apps track what people buy or where they are to charge them higher prices without telling them. This meant two people might pay different prices for the same loaf of bread just because of how their personal data is being tracked. Maryland passed this law to protect shoppers from unfair price changes and to keep grocery costs lower.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law sets new rules for big grocery stores and food delivery services:

- **No Personalized High Prices:** Large grocery stores and delivery apps cannot use "dynamic pricing" to charge one person a higher price for food than another person.
- **Privacy Rules:** Stores are not allowed to use facts about who you are—like your race, religion, or a disability—to keep you from getting a fair price or a deal that others get.
- **Fair Discounts are Still Allowed:** Stores can still have normal discounts, reward programs (like a "club card"), or special deals for students, teachers, senior citizens, or other groups.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This law is the first in the country to stop stores from using your data to raise food prices. It makes sure that everyone sees the same fair price when they go grocery shopping or when they see ads. It protects families from being charged more just because they have data that shows they might pay that higher price. This saves people money and helps keep their information private.

Bankruptcy Proceedings - Exemptions From Execution - Residential Real Property

SB 939

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law helps Marylanders keep their homes if they have a lot of debt or have to go to court for bankruptcy. It increases the amount of a home's value (which is called "home equity") that cannot be taken away if someone goes bankrupt. This means that even if you owe money, the home equity you have built up cannot be used to pay off those other debts. It also makes sure that more types of homes, like condos and co-ops, are protected.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, the amount of a home's value that was safe from being taken to pay for a debt was too low. Many families were at risk of losing their houses during hard times. This law was passed to give families a better chance of keeping a roof over their heads, even when they are having serious money problems.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law updates the rules for how much of a home's value is safe from being taken:

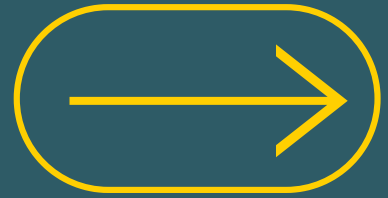
- **Higher Protection Limits:** The amount of home equity that is protected from being taken to pay off bankruptcy debts is increased from \$31,575 to \$125,000.
- **Protection for More Types of Homes:** The law now protects the home equity of condos and co-ops. It also protects homes that are held in a special legal category called a "revocable trust."
- **Adjusting for Inflation:** Starting in 2028, the amount of value that is safe will go up automatically. This helps the law keep up with the rising cost of living.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

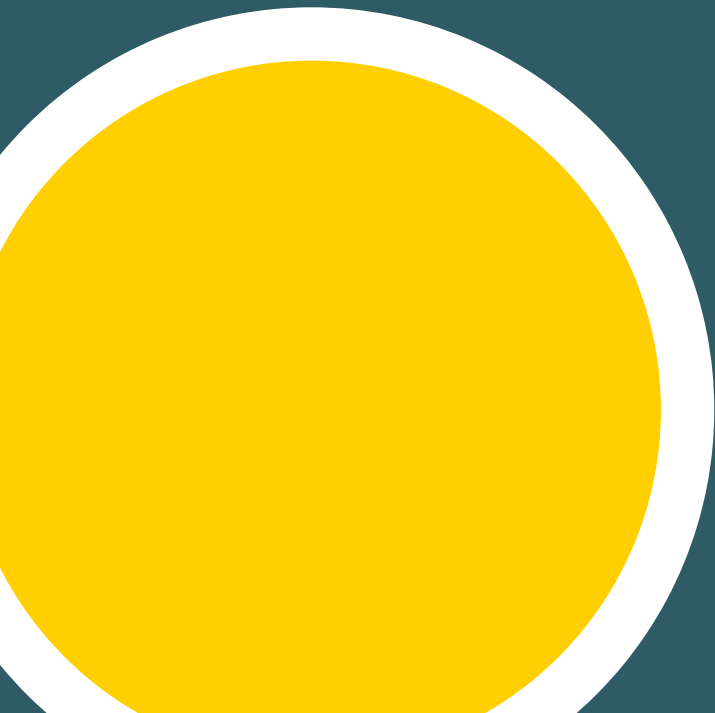
The new law helps Marylanders by giving families a stronger safety net. It helps prevent people from losing their homes. This lets them get back on their feet faster while they work to pay off their debts. In 2025, more than 12,000 people in Maryland went through bankruptcy, and this law will help homeowners who are facing bankruptcy stay in their houses during a financial crisis.

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW COMMITTEE

CRIMINAL LAW & PROCEDURE



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



Criminal Procedure - Expungement - No Finding and Case Terminated Without Finding

HB 187 | SB 320

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law helps people clear their criminal records through a process called expungement. It adds a new rule for when a court case ends without a judge saying "guilty" or "not guilty." This is called a "no finding" decision. Now, if a person has a "no finding" on their record, they can ask to have that charge erased.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, there was no way to erase a "no finding" charge from a criminal record. These old records would still show up when a person tried to get a job or rent a home. This happened even though the person was never found guilty of a crime. Maryland passed this law so that these records do not hold people back from achieving their goals.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law changes the rules for how someone can clear their record:

- **New Reasons to Clear Records:** A person can now ask to have their criminal record erased if a judge marked their case as "no finding" or said it was "terminated without finding."
- **Covers Many Charges:** This new rule works for a many criminal charges that resulted in a "no finding" decision. This includes many minor crimes and misdemeanors as well as more serious crimes and felonies that did not hurt anyone.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This change helps Marylanders by making sure that a court case that ends in a "no finding" decision does not stop someone from moving on with their life. By erasing these records, it is easier for people to find good jobs and a safe place to live. This law is especially helpful for people in Prince George's County, where many more court cases end in a "no finding" decision.

Youth Charging Reform Act

SB 323

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law changes the rules that courts use to handle cases when kids get in trouble by letting more kids start their cases in juvenile court rather than adult court. It also sets new rules for where kids stay while they wait for their court date so that kids don't have to be in the same jails as adults.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before the new law, kids would be automatically sent to a court for adults if they were arrested for certain crimes. This was unfair because it prevented kids from starting their cases in a special court for kids under the age of 18, called "juvenile court," where judges are experts in handling cases involving kids. In addition, the large majority of cases involving kids that began in adult court ended up in juvenile court anyways.

Oftentimes, kids are also kept in the same jails as adults while they wait for their court cases. This created dangerous and traumatic situations for kids, who are less able to defend themselves.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law protects people who are vulnerable to being taken advantage of:

- **Most Kids Stay in Juvenile Court:** The juvenile court will handle most cases for kids unless they are accused of a very serious crime.
- **Kept Away from Adults:** Kids must be held in jails that do not have adults .
- **Short Stays Only:** If a kid is sent to a jail where there are adult prisoners, the kid can never be kept in a place where they can see or hear the adult prisoners. In addition, kids can only stay in jails where they are adult prisoners for 6 hours or less.
- **Keeping Government Accountable:** The state will write reports every year to see how many kids are being held in adult jails, how long they stay there, and whether the rules about separating kids from adults have been broken.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Preventing Harm to Kids:** Kids who are accused of committing crimes deserve to be safe while they are waiting to go to court. By making sure kids are not around adult prisoners, it helps them stay out of more trouble and prevents them from being hurt or traumatized by an adult. Kids who start their cases in juvenile court are also less likely to get in trouble again compared to kids who start their cases in adult court.
- **Fairer and More Efficient Trials:** The new law also allows more kids to start their cases in juvenile court rather than adult court. This change saves everyone time and energy, because most cases involving kids that begin in adult court end up in juvenile court anyways.

Criminal Law - Benefits Exploitation

HB 216 | SB 140

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law stops people from stealing government benefits from others. This includes money that people receive from pensions, Medicare or Medicaid, disability benefits, veterans benefits, food aid from SNAP, and other types of government money. It makes it a crime to trick, threaten, or hide someone just to take their money for yourself.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

People, even family members, sometimes use threats or force people or members of their family to steal government benefits (which is called “trafficking”). Maryland passed this law to protect Marylanders from being hurt or tricked by those who want to steal their benefits.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law protects vulnerable people that may be taken advantage of by doing the following:

- **No Taking Benefits:** You cannot take someone’s government benefits for yourself. People who break this law can receive a large fine and/or go to prison.
- **No Coercion:** You cannot take money by threatening to hurt someone, taking away their medical care, stopping them from leaving their homes, lying to them, or hiding them from their friends and family.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This change protects elderly people, people with disabilities, and others who receive government benefits. It makes sure that these benefits go to the people who really need it to buy food and stay healthy rather than to people who are stealing these benefits. It helps everyone feel safer knowing there are rules to stop this kind of stealing, and it gives victims a way to get justice if they have been hurt by others.

Courts - Jury Service - Disqualification

SB 322

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law changes the rules for who can be on a jury. A jury is a group of people who listen to a court case and help a judge make a decision about the result of the case. The law lets more people serve on a jury, including most people who have been convicted of a crime but finished serving their sentences. This lets more people who were found guilty of crimes in the past help in court by serving as a juror.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, many people could never be on a jury if they were sentenced to more than one year in prison. Maryland wanted to update the rules so that people who have finished their sentences can do their part to help their community by serving on a jury.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law explains who can and cannot serve on a jury:

- **Who is Qualified:** To be a juror, you must be an adult and a U.S. citizen. You must also live in the same county as the court where the case is happening. You can serve on a jury even if you were found guilty of a crime or went to prison in the past as long as you have finished serving your sentence.
- **Current Legal Trouble:** You cannot be a juror if you are still serving a sentence for a serious crime. This includes being on parole or probation. You also cannot be on a jury if you have a serious court case against you right now.
- **Crimes Against the Court:** You are not allowed to help if you have a crime on your record for lying in court, threatening a witness or jury, or committing fraud.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **More Viewpoints on a Jury:** This change helps Maryland by allowing more people to share their ideas and help make important decisions in court. More perspectives on a jury leads to fairer decisions for people who are on trial for a crime.
- **Inclusion and Reintegration:** Including people who have finished their prison sentences in a jury allows these people to become full members of their community again by participating in the justice system. Communities are stronger when people are allowed to have the same rights and privileges as others after they make up for their mistakes.

Correctional Services - Maryland Parole Commission and Erroneously Convicted Individuals - Improvements in Transparency and Equity

SB 822

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law changes some of the rules used by the Parole Commission. This is the group of people who decide if someone in prison can come home early. The law makes their work more open and honest so that everyone knows how choices are made.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, it was sometimes hard for people in prison to see documents about their own cases that explained why the Parole Commission made certain choices about whether they can get parole. Maryland passed this law to make sure that the parole process is fair for everyone and that information is easy to find. Another problem was that the Parole Commission could decide to never give someone the chance to get parole.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law creates new rules for how the Parole Commission works:

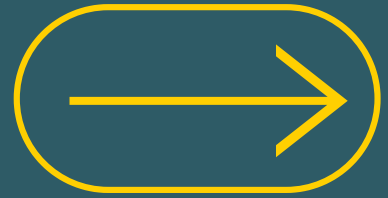
- **Access to Information:** People in prison and their lawyers can get copies of all reports used to decide their case before their hearing. Parole hearings must be recorded and made available to the person in prison.
- **Explaining the Choice:** When the Commission makes a choice about whether someone can get parole, they must explain the reasons why they said yes or no.
- **Always a Chance:** The Commission is not allowed to say "no" to parole forever. People will get a new chance to ask for parole every 2, 3, or 5 years depending on their case.
- **Public Reports:** The state must write a report every year that shows how many people were let out on parole and their race to ensure equity.
- **Help for False Imprisonment:** If someone was put in prison by mistake, the law makes it easier for them to get help from the state without a county trying to stop them.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **More Chances for Parole:** This change makes the legal system clearer and fairer for people in prison. It ensures that people in jail have a real chance to go home early if they can show that they have changed.
- **More Government Oversight:** By being more open about its choices, the Parole Commission helps everyone trust that the rules are being followed the same way for everyone. It also makes it easier for people in prison to challenge unfair decisions that prevent them from getting parole.

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW COMMITTEE

DISABILITY RIGHTS & PUBLIC BENEFITS



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



Maryland Protecting People with Disabilities Act

HB 1445 | SB 742

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law helps people with disabilities keep the disability benefits that they get from the state. This help lets them live in their own homes and communities instead of staying in a hospital or an institution.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Sometimes the government takes too long to finish paperwork, or it makes mistakes. This was causing some people to lose their medical benefits for their disabilities, even if they still needed it. Maryland passed this law to make sure that a mistake with a form or delays in receiving disability aid does not stop someone from getting the care they need to stay in their home.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law will help more people keep the disability benefits that they deserve:

- **Faster Answers:** The state must decide if you can get help within 45 or 90 days after you ask for it.
- **No Paperwork Traps:** The state cannot stop your help just because a signature or a form is missing unless they try very hard to find the information first.
- **Easy to Understand:** The state must give you information that is easy to read and in your own language.
- **Keeping Help During Appeals:** If the state says you can no longer get disability aid, you can ask a judge to look at your case. While you wait for the judge to decide, you can keep getting your help.
- **Fixing Mistakes:** If the state stops your help by mistake, they must fix it quickly and give you back any help you missed.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Security and Stability:** This law helps people with disabilities feel safe and included in their neighborhoods. It makes sure that they don't lose their homes or their care just because of a paperwork error.
- **Government Responsibility:** The law makes the rules on disability benefits fairer and faster. It requires the state to go through a careful process when it makes decisions about disability aid to make sure no mistakes are made. This helps everyone get the support they need to live a good life.

Election Law - Petitions and Ballot Questions - Contents, Plain Language Requirement, and Procedures

HB 44 | SB 29

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law makes the information provided on ballots (the paper you use to cast a vote) much easier to read. It says that ballots must be written in plain language so that everyone can understand them. It also requires ballots to tell voters what impact their vote will have to help voters make informed decisions.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Sometimes the rules and laws that people vote on through a ballot use hard-to-understand words that are unfamiliar to regular people. This can make voting confusing. This law was passed so that every voter knows exactly what they are choosing when they go to vote. It will be especially helpful for people with disabilities or people who are not fluent in English.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law makes it easier to understand the issues that you vote on:

- **Simple Words:** All ballot questions and petitions must use clear and simple words that a voter can easily understand.
- **Explaining the Choice:** Each choice on the ballot must have a short note that explains what will happen if you pick it.
- **Listening to People:** The state must show the ballot questions to the public for 15 days so that people can share their ideas and comments.
- **Posting Information:** The full text of important laws must be put on a website for at least 90 days before the election so people have time to read them before voting.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Accessible Information:** The new law helps Marylanders by providing easy-to-understand information on ballots, which makes voting fair and simple for everyone. It also allows people to see and research information about new laws on public websites.
- **Understanding Government:** The law ensures that no one is confused by complicated words when they are making important choices for their state at the ballot box. By letting people see the questions early and leave comments, the law makes sure the voting process is honest. It also lets people know how their choices will affect their futures.

Nursing Facilities - Involuntary Discharge or Transfer

HB 1002 | SB 493

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law protects people living in nursing homes. It stops these homes from making people leave unless there is a safe and ready place for them to go. It also requires nursing homes to tell someone ahead of time that they will be required to leave the home, and the nursing home must say exactly where they will go next. If the person who has to move does not agree, they can raise their concerns through a process called a “hearing.”

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Sometimes, nursing homes would evict elderly people and make them move out without a clear plan for where the person could go next. Some people were even sent to hotels or shelters that could not give them the medical help they needed. This law makes sure that every person has a real home and a way to take care of themselves before they move.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law makes housing for elderly people for secure and stable:

- **No Hotels or Shelters:** A nursing home cannot move a person to a hotel, a homeless shelter, or any other temporary place.
- **Clear Warnings:** The home must give a written warning, called a “notice,” at least 30 days before a person has to move.
- **Easy Access to Help:** The notice must include contact information for people who can help the person stay in their home. It must also give the person information about how to get a hearing, which can also help the person stay in their home.
- **New Rules for Changes:** If the nursing home changes its moving plan, it must give a new notice to the person who is being asked to move and wait between 7 and 30 more days before the move can happen.
- **A Safe Plan:** Every person must have a written plan that shows exactly where they will live and how their medical needs will be met before they can be required to move.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This change helps people in nursing homes stay safe and healthy. It makes sure that no one is left without a safe and secure place to live just because a nursing home wants them to leave. It gives families peace of mind knowing their loved ones will always be treated with respect and will have their needs met.

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW COMMITTEE

ESTATES & TRUSTS



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



Real Property - Transfer-on-Death Deed - Establishment

HB 738

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law lets people choose who their house or land goes to after they die through a "transfer-on-death deed." This law makes the process of passing down property much easier and simpler.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

In the past, when someone died, it could take a very long time for their family to get a house that the deceased person wanted to pass on to their family. Families often had to go to a special court (called probate court) for many months to get this property. This new law was made to make the process faster and easier and to allow families to stay in their homes while waiting the court to make a decision about who gets the property.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law helps people make sure that their property goes to who they want it to after they pass away.

- **Pick a Beneficiary:** You can name a person to get your house when you pass away by signing a special deed.
- **You Are Still the Boss:** While you are alive, the house is still yours. You can still live in it or even sell it if you want to.
- **Change Your Mind:** If you change your mind, you can cancel the deed at any time.
- **No Court Wait:** The person you picked gets the house automatically when you die, so they do not have to wait for a judge to tell them that they can keep the house.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This change helps Maryland families by making it simple to plan for the future. It saves people money because they do not have to pay for long court cases. It also gives homeowners peace of mind because they know their house will go to the right person in the future.

By allowing people to choose who gets their house after they pass away through an easy-to-use form, the law also saves people from having to spend a lot of money to hire a lawyer.

Registers of Wills - Appointment of Personal Representatives

HB 963

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law removes some of the restrictions on who can help take care of a person's home and money after they pass away. This helper is called a "personal representative." The new law says that family members can act as personal representatives, even if they are not U.S. citizens.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, there were rules that stopped many people who were not U.S. citizens from helping their families manage their money or property after losing a loved one. This law helps families during a difficult time by letting them pick the person they trust the most to help with managing a loved one's property.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law removes restrictions on non-citizens to let them help their families when a loved one passes away:

- **Letting Non-Citizens Help:** The law changes a rule that blocked people who are not citizens from being a personal representative. This allows people to more easily pick the family members that they trust the most to manage their property after they die. However, some limitations on allowing non-citizen family members to be personal representatives still exist.
- **Keeping Things Safe:** There are still rules to make sure the personal representative is responsible. They cannot be under 18 years old or have a history of "serious crimes" like stealing or lying.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This change helps Marylanders by letting families take care of each other during difficult times. It makes sure that a person can choose a trusted family member to handle their money and property after they pass away, even if that family member is not a citizen. This makes the process of handling a death much simpler and kinder and allows more members of a family to help each other out.

Property Taxes - Tax Sales, Legacy Protection Program, and Tax Credits

HB 1148

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law helps people who inherit a house from a family member. It creates a new program called the Legacy Protection Program. This program keeps families in their homes and helps them become the legal owners of the home that they inherit, even if they have trouble paying property taxes. It also helps people who inherit a home save money through tax credits.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Sometimes when a person dies, their family keeps living in the house that the person owned. However, the family might not yet have their name on the legal papers for the house. Because of this, they might not get help paying taxes, and the house could be sold to someone else. This law was made to stop those tax sales and help families stay in their homes.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law makes it easier for someone who inherits a home to keep it:

- **Help with Taxes:** People who inherit a home can get tax credits for up to three years even if their name is not yet on the official papers for the house (which are called a “deed”). After completing the paperwork to become the legal owner of the home, a person can continue receiving the tax credit.
- **Free Legal and Financial Help:** The state will help people find and use free and low cost legal services.
- **Access to Information:** A worker called an Ombudsman will help families understand the rules and send them a simple guide that explains the Legacy Protection Program.
- **Stopping Sales:** The law helps make sure these homes are not sold for unpaid taxes while the family is getting help.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This change helps Maryland families keep their family legacy safe. It gives people time and money to fix and fill out legal papers so they can keep living in their homes. By providing free lawyers and tax help, the law makes sure that losing a loved one does not also mean losing a house.

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW COMMITTEE

FAMILY LAW



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



Hospitals – Emergency Pregnancy-Related Medical Conditions

– Procedures

SB 169 | HB 372

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law makes sure that every hospital in Maryland has clear rules for helping pregnant women during a medical emergency. It says hospitals must check every pregnant patient to see if they need help right away, and then, the hospital has to give the right treatment to keep them safe.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, some people were worried that hospitals might not give a pregnant woman all the medical care she needed during an emergency. For example, national rules about when doctors can end a pregnancy to help the mother's health have been changing, which causes confusion. Maryland wanted its own strong law so that doctors can make choices based on what the patient needs to be safe and healthy.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law sets up a “safety plan” for emergency rooms:

- **Emergency Check-Ups:** When a pregnant woman goes to the emergency room, the hospital must do a check to see if there is a serious health problem. If there is an emergency, hospital workers must provide all the care that the mother needs to stop her condition from getting worse.
- **Necessary Care:** The law says if a doctor decides that the pregnancy needs to end to save the woman patient's health, the hospital must allow the doctor to end the pregnancy.
- **Protecting Hospital Workers:** The law protects doctors and nurses from being punished by the hospital for following these safety rules.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

The new law helps Marylanders by making sure a pregnancy emergency is treated like any other life-saving emergency. It means that if a pregnant woman is in danger, she will get help right away at the closest hospital. Hospitals must provide this help, even if it requires doctors to end a pregnancy. The new law allows doctors to put the patient's health first. This keeps pregnant women healthy, gives clear rules to hospitals, and protects doctors and nurses from punishment.

The Family Investment Program

HB 1490

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The Family Investment Program helps families who get money from the state. Usually, parents have to follow strict rules about child support to keep getting this help. But sometimes, those rules are too hard to follow. This law makes a list of "Good Reasons" why a parent might need a break from those rules so they don't lose the money that their family needs.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Sometimes, families need extra money from the state to buy food and clothes. To get this money, the state would ask one parent to help find the other parent to get child support. But sometimes, that is not safe. A parent might be scared because the other parent hurt or abused them. Before, if they didn't help find the other parent, the state would take their money away. Now, a new law says that if a parent has a "Good Reason," they can still get the money their family needs.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This new law creates a safety net to help parents stay safe:

- **What is a "Good Reason"?** A "Good Reason" means it is not safe or possible for a parent to follow the normal rules. This could be because:
 - The parent is trying to stay away from someone who is abusive.
 - The parent is very sick.
 - The family does not have a home to live in.
- **No More Losing Money:** If a parent has a "Good Reason," the state cannot take away their help. The family will still get the money they need for food and clothes.
- **Making it Easy to Get Help:** Parents don't have to fill out a mountain of paperwork. They can just talk to someone from the state in person or on the phone to explain what is happening.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **No Hard Choices:** The new law lets parents get the money they need to buy food for their kids. It also helps parents keep their families safe by keeping parents and kids away from dangerous situations.
- **Kinder Rules and More Help:** The rules are now easier to understand and follow, and the state will help you figure things out if you ask for help.

Family Law - Temporary and Final Protective Orders - Duration

HB 497

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law gives people who need protection more time to make sure they and their families are safe from someone who might hurt or abuse them while they are waiting for permanent relief. When someone finds themselves in a threatening situation, they can request a “temporary protective order,” which requires persons who could be dangerous to stay away from the person who is seeking protection. This temporary order gives a lot of relief to the person who is seeking protection, including ordering the opposite side to stay away and also ordering custody of shared children. The new law extends the time of the temporary protective order from 7 days to 14 days.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

In the past, temporary protective orders, which require someone to keep their distance, lasted just one week. This was often not enough time for the parties in the case to prepare for the final protective order hearing or to serve everyone that needed to attend the hearing. This caused half of the final protective hearings to be postponed.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law alters the safety timeline and introduces new provisions:

- **Extended Safety Period:** Once a judge signs a temporary protective order, it provides protection for 14 days instead of just 7. This change gives police more time to find people and give them court papers so that they know to go to court for a hearing about a final protective order.
- **Timely Court Dates:** The law says that the final court hearing must occur within those 14 days. This change gives families more guarantees that they will receive their final protective orders promptly and they do not have to worry about postponements.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **More Breathing Room:** This change to temporary protective orders helps Marylanders by giving people more time to make decisions in difficult circumstances. It also ensures individuals are protected from potential harm while they await court assistance for a more permanent solution.
- **More Time for Court Preparation:** By extending the duration of the protective order, everyone has more time and flexibility to prepare for their court hearing, including finding lawyers and gathering important documents.

HOUSING



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



The Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act

SB 937

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The Maryland Fair Chance Housing Act changes the rules for how landlords check a person's past. If a landlord refuses to rent a house to someone because they have a criminal record, the landlord must have a very good reason for why a person's past mistake makes them an irresponsible tenant. The new rules set out by the law make it easier for people to find a home, even if they made mistakes a long time ago.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, many people in Maryland, especially Black and Brown persons who are subject to over-policing, could not rent a home if they had any kind of criminal record. Even minor offenses, like a misdemeanor, could stop someone from finding a place to live. The legislature passed this law to give everyone a fair chance to find a home and increase housing opportunities for many more Marylanders.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law sets up a "step-by-step" process for renting an apartment:

- **Conditional Offer:** A landlord must first give a "Conditional Offer" before checking a renter's criminal record. This means they say, "Yes, you can live here as long as your background check is okay."
- **Limited Look-Back:** Landlords can usually only look at things that happened in the last five years. They cannot use old records to say "no" to a renter.
- **Serious Crimes Exception:** Landlords are still allowed to check for very serious crimes, like murder or certain sexual offenses, before they make a conditional offer.
- **Right to Explain:** If a landlord finds something on a record and wants to say "no," they must give the person a chance to explain or show why they will be a good renter.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **More Chances to Find a Home:** This change helps Marylanders by making sure a past mistake doesn't punish them from renting a home forever into the future.
- **Clear Rules for Landlords:** The new law gives landlords clear rules to follow to make sure they check their renters' backgrounds fairly. At the same time, landlords can still say "no" to people with a history of very serious crimes.

Landlord and Tenant - Discrimination in Housing for Income-Based Housing Subsidies and Positive Rental History Reporting

HB 315 | SB 335

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law makes it easier for people who use housing vouchers to rent a home. Vouchers are a way for the government to provide money to help pay rent. This law makes it so that when landlords are considering renting, they look at a renter's past money habits and income in a fair way. The law also helps renters get better credit scores.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, some people could not rent a home because of a low credit score or because they did not make enough money. This happened even if they had a voucher to help pay the rent. This law ensures that having a voucher or having money problems in the past does not stop someone from finding a home.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law creates a few important rules for landlords and tenants:

- **Fair Rules for Vouchers:** Landlords cannot say "no" to a renter just because they use a housing voucher or have a low credit score.
- **Checking Income:** If a landlord compares the cost of the rent to how much money a person makes, they can only look at the part of the rent that the person pays themselves and not the cost covered by the voucher. This change to the "income test" is fairer because it allows a voucher to be counted as part of a renter's income.
- **Reporting Good Payments:** Landlords who own six or more rental homes must give renters the opportunity to tell a credit company when a tenant pays their rent on time. This gives renters more chances to improve their credit score.
- **Safety Checks:** Landlords can still say "no" to a person if that person broke serious rules or damaged a home in the past.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **More Opportunity for Renters:** This new law makes it easier for families who have vouchers to find a stable home. It also gives people a way to make their credit scores better just by paying rent.
- **Clear Rules for Landlords:** The new law gives landlords clear rules about how to calculate tenant income when the tenant has a voucher.

Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination - Regulations, Intent, and Discriminatory Effect

HB 573

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law makes sure that everyone has a fair chance to find a home in Maryland. It says that rules made by people who own or sell homes cannot be unfair or discriminatory to certain groups of people, even if the owner did not intend to be unfair. If someone feels they were treated unfairly when trying to buy or rent a home, they can ask a court for help.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Sometimes, rules about renting or buying a house can hurt certain groups of people more than others. These groups include people with disabilities, families with children, or people of a certain race. Before this law, it was hard to stop these rules from hurting these groups, if the owner said they didn't mean to be unfair. This law makes sure that all housing rules will be fair for everyone.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law updates the rules about how Fair Housing is handled in Maryland:

- **Focus on “Disparate Impact”:** The law says a rule is against the law if it makes it harder for a certain group of people to get housing. It does not matter if the person meant to cause harm or not.
- **Government Responsibility:** The state must now make sure that local leaders check and report on how they are making housing fair in their own towns.
- **Exceptions for Good Reasons:** Owners who have a very important reason to have a rule that might harm a certain group will not break the new law if they can show there was no other way to make the rule fair.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Fairness in Housing:** The new law makes sure housing is open to everyone - regardless of race, religion, disability or if you pay your rent with a voucher.
- **Stopping Hidden Discrimination:** The new law helps stop "hidden" unfairness or discrimination that keeps people out of certain neighborhoods. By focusing on how the rules that landlords have actually work, the law gives everyone a fair shot at finding a good place to live.

Community Schools Rental Assistance Program (Budget Bill FY 2027) SB 282

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The Budget Bill added \$6 million to a program that helps families who have children in community schools pay for housing costs. This program is called the Community Schools Rental Assistance Program (CSRAP). After the new law, the State of Maryland has \$11 million total to help families. Out of that money, \$3 million is set aside just for people living in Prince George's County. This money helps families of students pay for rent, utility bills, or the cost of moving to a new house.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Children need a safe and steady home to do well in school. When a family is worried about money or cannot pay their bills, it causes a lot of stress. Families might even have to move to a different neighborhood. This makes it very hard for kids to focus on their education. If kids cannot learn well, they might have a harder time going to college or finding a good job later. More money for this program means more parents can keep their kids in the same school and keep them learning without disruption.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law helps parents provide for their families to help kids do well in school:

- **More Money for Emergency Help:** This law gives the state more than twice the money it had before for this program. This means many more families can get help with their rent and utility bills. The money will go to the families and towns that need it the most.
- **Financially Stronger Families:** The money will be used to stop families from being evicted from their homes or having their lights turned off. This support helps parents take care of their children so the kids can do their best in school.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Housing Stability:** Funding this program more makes it easier for parents to keep their families stable. Parents and kids won't have to worry as much about whether they can pay for their rent and stay in their current home. This helps kids focus and learn more while they are at school.
- **Brighter Futures for Kids:** When children get a better education, they have a better chance to do great things in the future. This makes Maryland neighborhoods safer and better for everyone.

MARYLAND ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION
PUBLIC INTEREST LAW COMMITTEE

IMMIGRATION



2026 Maryland Legislative Session



Public Safety - Immigration Enforcement Agreements - Prohibition HB 444 | SB 245

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law stops state and local police from making agreements with the federal Immigration and Custom's Enforcement (ICE) through the 287(g) program. The 287(g) program allows state and local police to help ICE arrest people, keep them in jail, and question them about their immigration status.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, police in some counties in Maryland had agreements with ICE through the 287(g) program. These agreements allowed local police to keep people in jail and to question them about their immigration status. If the police thought that someone in jail was in the country illegally, they would help ICE deport that person and send them out of the country. This caused fear among communities and it stopped them from reporting crimes or asking the police for help.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law stops most immigration enforcement agreements between Maryland police and federal immigration agents:

- **No More 287(g) Agreements:** Maryland police are not allowed to help federal immigration agents arrest, detain, and charge people with immigration-related offenses.
- **Cooperation on Shared Safety Goals:** Maryland police can still help federal law enforcement keep the public safe by investigating and arresting violent criminals and people who have committed serious crimes.

HOW THE NEW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Trust in Policing:** This law helps Marylanders trust their police and government. When people know that their state and local police are focused on protecting them, they feel safer and are more willing to report crime and help police investigate crimes.
- **Safer Communities:** The law tells police to be focused on investigating and preventing crimes that hurt Marylanders, so state and local police resources are targeted towards safety.

The Maryland Values Act of 2026

SB 810

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The Maryland Values Act keeps people safe when they seek public services at places like schools, and public school bus stops, hospitals, courts, and buildings that give out food, among other government owned buildings. The law says that the Attorney General, Maryland's top lawyer, must set rules for how workers at these public buildings can interact with agents doing immigration enforcement.

First, immigration agents are not allowed to have access to any part of these buildings that require a screening or is not open to the public if they don't have a judicial warrant signed by a judge. Second, if immigration agents do show up to these places, the law requires that there be rules in place that tell workers how to deal with the agents and what to do to protect people from immigration enforcement.

These changes allow ordinary people to visit these places for public services without worrying that immigration agents might secretly be using the location to stop or arrest them without a judicial warrant.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

In many parts of Maryland, families were afraid to use public services. They were worried that if they took their kids to school or went to a doctor, they might run into immigration agents. When people are too scared to leave their homes to get the things they need, it hurts the whole community. Maryland wanted to make sure that no one has to choose between their safety and their education, health, or other needs.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

The law sets up a “boundary” between local services and federal immigration enforcement:

- **Protection for “Sensitive Locations”:** Immigration agents are not allowed to have special access to places that provide public services.
- **Limits on Sharing Data:** Government workers are not allowed to give your private information to immigration officers. They can only do this if they are shown a special legal paper from a judge called a judicial warrant.
- **Focus on Local Jobs:** State and local police and other government workers are told to focus on their own jobs—like teaching students or protecting the peace—rather than doing the work of federal immigration agents.

HOW THE NEW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This law helps people trust the government more because it lets people know that the government will not use important public services to target them for immigration reasons. These changes will help everyone in Maryland get the help they need without being worried about being targeted by immigration agents.

The Community Trust Act

SB 791

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The Community Trust Act sets strict limits on what local police and jail workers can and cannot do when it comes to immigration.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

In many parts of Maryland, local police and jail workers were working with immigration agents to deport individuals in their care. By working with ICE to deport individuals, these jail workers were not following the Constitution and caused great harm by separating families. This practice also made residents scared of interactions with police, since the police could deport them. Maryland leaders wanted to protect people's rights and build trust between police, jail workers, and the community.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law sets clear "do's and don'ts" for local officers and jails when it comes to immigration:

- **No Unnecessary Questions:** Local police officers are not allowed to ask people about where they were born or if they are citizens during a normal traffic stop or a search.
- **Fair Jail Rules:** Local jails cannot keep someone locked up longer to wait for federal immigration agents to arrive, unless a judge has signed a special paper called a judicial warrant.
- **No Threats:** Jail workers are not allowed to scare or threaten people because of where they come from or because of their immigration status. This makes sure that jail workers focus on preventing crime, not on helping immigration agents arrest and deport people because of their citizenship status.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This law helps keep neighborhoods safe by making sure no one is afraid to call 9-1-1. When everyone in a community feels they can talk to the police without being hurt themselves, it is easier to catch criminals and solve problems. It also keeps families together and ensures that local police focus on their main job: protecting the peace and helping all Marylanders stay safe.

The Data Privacy Act

HB 711

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The Data Privacy Act makes strict rules to protect your private information. This includes facts about where you live, where you go, and what you do online. The law stops this information from being sold or shared with people who should not have it, including immigration officers.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, some companies could take information from your phone or from the state and sell it to others. For example, federal immigration agents could see data that the state of Maryland had about ordinary people, like their driver's license.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law puts a "lock" on your digital information in several ways:

- **No Selling to Agents:** It stops companies from knowingly selling your personal data to immigration agencies that are trying to find and deport people.
- **Protecting Your Location:** It creates strict rules for location data. This is the information that shows exactly where your phone or car is located.
- **Checking Public Records:** When someone asks the government for a public record, government employees must now check to make sure that the information will not be used to target someone based on their immigration status.
- **Defining "Sensitive Data":** The law says that things like your race, religion, health, and location are "sensitive." This means they get extra protection and cannot be sold to companies that want to show you ads.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Data Privacy:** This change helps Marylanders by giving them more control over their own lives. You should not have to worry that using an app or getting a license will lead to your data being sold to companies.
- **Trust in Government:** The new law protects Marylanders from immigration agents who might try to use someone's personal information to arrest them. This helps people trust their state government and get help without being afraid of being tracked.

Correctional Services - Private Detention Facilities - Zoning Requirement

HB 1017

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law bans “private detention facilities.” These are buildings run by private companies that are used as jails or as places where people are locked up because of their immigration status. The law mostly stops these buildings from being built or used in Maryland.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

Before this law, people were worried that private companies might try to build jails or detention centers in neighborhoods without asking the people who live there. Sometimes, these buildings were being planned in areas meant for houses or stores. Maryland leaders wanted to make sure these buildings don't just pop up anywhere. They also wanted the state to have more control over how people who are detained are treated.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law places several restrictions that will control how and where private detention can be used:

- **Ban on Detention Facilities:** The law tells the federal government and private companies that they cannot build new private detention centers in Maryland.
- **Special Zoning Rules:** If the federal government or a private company wants to build a detention facility, they must get permission from the State of Maryland or the local community through a long and detailed process called “zoning.”
- **Defining Detention:** The law clearly explains that “detention” includes places where people are held for immigration reasons, not just for criminal reasons.
- **The Attorney General’s Power:** The law gives the Maryland Attorney General the power to go to court to stop any company that tries to break these rules. Companies that do not follow the law can be fined \$10,000 every single day.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

- **Giving Marylanders a Voice:** This change gives Marylanders a say in what happens in their own neighborhoods. It stops big companies from moving into a town and opening a private jail without permission.
- **Thriving Neighborhoods:** Stopping private detention facilities reduces the number of people who are targeted and locked up because of their immigration status. It also helps neighborhoods stay focused on homes, schools, and local shops.

Hospitals – Immigration Enforcement Action – Policy Requirement

SB 792

WHAT IS THE NEW LAW?

The new law says every hospital in Maryland must have a set of rules. These rules tell workers exactly what to do if immigration agents come into the hospital. It also says that hospital workers must take classes every year so they know how to keep their patients safe when immigration agents are in the building.

PROBLEM THE NEW LAW SOLVES

This law helps hospital workers take better care of the people who are in the hospital. It teaches them what to do if immigration agents come to the hospital.

WHAT THE NEW LAW DOES

This law creates several protections for patients and their families:

- **Creating a Plan:** Hospitals must write down a clear plan. This plan explains how they will handle immigration agents while keeping patients safe. The plan also tells hospital workers how to stop immigration agents from taking patients' private information.
- **Annual Training:** Every person who works at a hospital must take a class every year. They will learn the rules for what they should do if they are confronted by immigration agents and how to keep a patient's information private.
- **Following the Expert:** The rules must follow the advice of the Maryland Attorney General, who is the state's top lawyer.

HOW THE NEW LAW HELPS MARYLANDERS

This change helps Marylanders by making hospitals safer when there are immigration agents in the building. When people know a hospital has a plan to protect them, they are more likely to go to the doctor before they get very sick. This keeps families healthy and makes the whole community safer. It also helps hospital workers do their main job: saving lives and helping people feel better.

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