

HOUSE BILL 347

E1, D3, N2

1lr0675

(PRE-FILED)

By: **Delegate Shetty**

Requested: September 23, 2020

Introduced and read first time: January 13, 2021

Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Criminal Law – Exploitation of Vulnerable Adult or Elderly Individual – Undue**
3 **Influence**

4 FOR the purpose of altering the definition of “undue influence” for purposes of provisions
5 of law prohibiting the exploitation of certain vulnerable adults or elderly individuals;
6 requiring a court, in determining whether a transfer of property was induced by
7 undue influence, to consider certain factors; providing for the application of this Act;
8 and generally relating to the exploitation of vulnerable adults or elderly individuals.

9 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
10 Article – Commercial Law
11 Section 13–204(a)(15) and (b)
12 Annotated Code of Maryland
13 (2013 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

14 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
15 Article – Criminal Law
16 Section 8–801(a)(1), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f), and (g)
17 Annotated Code of Maryland
18 (2012 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

19 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
20 Article – Criminal Law
21 Section 8–801(a)(6)
22 Annotated Code of Maryland
23 (2012 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

24 BY adding to
25 Article – Criminal Law
26 Section 8–801(h)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



Annotated Code of Maryland
(2012 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Estates and Trusts
Section 11–111
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2017 Replacement Volume and 2020 Supplement)

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

Article – Commercial Law

13–204.

(a) In addition to any other of its powers and duties, the Division has the powers and duties to:

(15) (i) Bring a civil action for damages or an action under this title against a person who violates § 8–801 of the Criminal Law Article on behalf of a victim of the offense or, if the victim is deceased, the victim’s estate;

(ii) Recover damages under this item for property loss or damage;
and

(iii) If the Division prevails in an action brought under this item, recover the costs of the action for the use of the Office of the Attorney General.

(b) A conviction for an offense under § 8–801 of the Criminal Law Article is not a prerequisite for maintenance of an action under subsection (a)(15) of this section.

Article – Criminal Law

8–801.

(a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

(6) (i) “Undue influence” means domination [and], influence, **OR EXCESSIVE PERSUASION** amounting to force and coercion exercised by another person to such an extent that a vulnerable adult or an individual at least 68 years old was prevented from exercising free judgment and choice **AND THAT RESULTS IN INEQUITY**.

(ii) “Undue influence” does not include the normal influence that one member of a family has over another member of the family.

1 (b) (1) A person may not knowingly and willfully obtain by deception,
2 intimidation, or undue influence the property of an individual that the person knows or
3 reasonably should know is a vulnerable adult with intent to deprive the vulnerable adult
4 of the vulnerable adult's property.

5 (2) A person may not knowingly and willfully obtain by deception,
6 intimidation, or undue influence the property of an individual that the person knows or
7 reasonably should know is at least 68 years old, with intent to deprive the individual of the
8 individual's property.

9 (c) (1) (i) A person convicted of a violation of this section when the value of
10 the property is at least \$1,500 but less than \$25,000 is guilty of a felony and:

11 1. is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 5 years or a fine
12 not exceeding \$10,000 or both; and

13 2. shall restore the property taken or its value to the owner,
14 or, if the owner is deceased, restore the property or its value to the owner's estate.

15 (ii) A person convicted of a violation of this section when the value of
16 the property is at least \$25,000 but less than \$100,000 is guilty of a felony and:

17 1. is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 10 years or a fine
18 not exceeding \$15,000 or both; and

19 2. shall restore the property taken or its value to the owner,
20 or, if the owner is deceased, restore the property or its value to the owner's estate.

21 (iii) A person convicted of a violation of this section when the value of
22 the property is \$100,000 or more is guilty of a felony and:

23 1. is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 20 years or a fine
24 not exceeding \$25,000 or both; and

25 2. shall restore the property taken or its value to the owner,
26 or, if the owner is deceased, restore the property or its value to the owner's estate.

27 (2) A person convicted of a violation of this section when the value of the
28 property is less than \$1,500 is guilty of a misdemeanor and:

29 (i) is subject to imprisonment not exceeding 1 year or a fine not
30 exceeding \$500 or both; and

31 (ii) shall restore the property taken or its value to the owner, or, if
32 the owner is deceased, restore the property or its value to the owner's estate.

(d) A sentence imposed under this section may be separate from and consecutive to or concurrent with a sentence for any crime based on the act or acts establishing the violation of this section.

(e) (1) If a defendant fails to restore fully the property taken or its value as ordered under subsection (c) of this section, the defendant is disqualified, to the extent of the defendant's failure to restore the property or its value, from inheriting, taking, enjoying, receiving, or otherwise benefiting from the estate, insurance proceeds, or property of the victim of the offense, whether by operation of law or pursuant to a legal document executed or entered into by the victim before the defendant shall have been convicted under this section.

(2) The defendant has the burden of proof with respect to establishing under paragraph (1) of this subsection that the defendant has fully restored the property taken or its value.

(f) This section may not be construed to impose criminal liability on a person who, at the request of the victim of the offense, the victim's family, or the court appointed guardian of the victim, has made a good faith effort to assist the victim in the management of or transfer of the victim's property.

(g) In addition to any penalties set forth in this section, a violation of this section:

(1) is an unfair, abusive, or deceptive trade practice within the meaning of Title 13 of the Commercial Law Article; and

(2) is subject to the enforcement and penalty provisions contained in Title 13 of the Commercial Law Article.

(H) IN DETERMINING WHETHER PROPERTY WAS OBTAINED BY UNDUE INFLUENCE, THE COURT SHALL CONSIDER:

(1) THE VULNERABILITY OF THE VICTIM, INCLUDING:

(I) INCAPACITY;

(II) ILLNESS;

(III) DISABILITY;

(IV) INJURY;

(V) AGE;

(VI) EDUCATION;

1 (VII) IMPAIRED COGNITIVE FUNCTION;

2 (VIII) EMOTIONAL DISTRESS;

3 (IX) ISOLATION; AND

4 (X) DEPENDENCY;

5 (2) WHETHER THE DEFENDANT KNEW OR SHOULD HAVE KNOWN OF
6 THE ALLEGED VICTIM'S VULNERABILITY;

7 (3) THE DEFENDANT'S APPARENT AUTHORITY, INCLUDING STATUS
8 AS:

9 (I) A FIDUCIARY;

10 (II) A FAMILY MEMBER;

11 (III) A CARE PROVIDER;

12 (IV) A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL;

13 (V) A LEGAL PROFESSIONAL;

14 (VI) A SPIRITUAL ADVISER; OR

15 (VII) AN EXPERT;

16 (4) THE ACTIONS OR TACTICS USED BY THE DEFENDANT, INCLUDING:

17 (I) CONTROLLING NECESSARIES OF LIFE, MEDICATION, THE
18 ALLEGED VICTIM'S INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS, ACCESS TO INFORMATION, OR
19 SLEEP;

20 (II) USING AFFECTION, INTIMIDATION, OR COERCION; AND

21 (III) INITIATING OF CHANGES IN PERSONAL OR PROPERTY
22 RIGHTS, USING OF HASTE OR SECRECY IN EFFECTING THOSE CHANGES, EFFECTING
23 CHANGES AT INAPPROPRIATE TIMES AND PLACES, AND CLAIMING EXPERTISE IN
24 EFFECTING CHANGES; AND

25 (5) THE EQUITY OF THE RESULT, INCLUDING:

26 (I) THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES TO THE ALLEGED VICTIM;

(II) ANY DIVERGENCE FROM THE VICTIM'S PRIOR INTENT OR
COURSE OF CONDUCT OR DEALING;

(III) THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE VALUE CONVEYED TO THE
VALUE OF ANY SERVICES OR CONSIDERATION RECEIVED; AND

(IV) THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE CHANGE IN LIGHT OF THE
LENGTH AND NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP.

Article – Estates and Trusts

11–111.

(a) A person convicted of unlawfully obtaining property from a victim in violation of § 8–801(b) of the Criminal Law Article shall be disqualified from inheriting, taking, enjoying, receiving, or otherwise benefitting from the estate, insurance proceeds, or property of the victim, to the extent provided in § 8–801(e) of the Criminal Law Article.

(b) A person disqualified from inheriting, taking, enjoying, receiving, or otherwise benefitting from the estate, insurance proceeds, or property of the victim in accordance with subsection (a) of this section shall be treated as if the person predeceased the victim.

(c) In the event a distribution is erroneously made to a person disqualified from inheriting, taking, enjoying, receiving, or otherwise benefitting from the estate, insurance proceeds, or property of the victim in violation of subsection (a) of this section, the disqualified person shall make full restitution to the heir, legatee, or beneficiary who should have received the distribution in accordance with subsection (b) of this section.

(d) A fiduciary or other person who distributes property in good faith and without actual knowledge of a conviction under § 8–801 of the Criminal Law Article is not personally liable for the distribution.

SECTION 2. 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 civil action or proceeding to determine a benefit from the estate, insurance proceeds, or property of a victim that is pending before the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2021.