

HOUSE BILL 574

R3, D3
HB 928/10 – JUD

11r1731
CF SB 483

By: **Delegates Waldstreicher, Anderson, Barkley, Carr, Dumais, Glenn, Lee, Malone, Mitchell, B. Robinson, Simmons, Smigiel, and Washington**
Introduced and read first time: February 9, 2011
Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Punitive Damages – High-Risk Drunk Drivers**

3 FOR the purpose of authorizing a finder of fact to determine that a person with a
4 certain alcohol concentration in the blood or breath of the person who causes
5 personal injury or wrongful death while driving or attempting to drive a motor
6 vehicle was acting with malice and award punitive damages under certain
7 circumstances; requiring a party who seeks to recover punitive damages under
8 this Act to plead certain facts with particularity; providing for a standard of
9 proof of clear and convincing evidence for a claim of punitive damages under
10 this Act; providing that punitive damages under this Act may not be awarded in
11 the absence of an award of compensatory damages; providing that evidence of
12 the defendant's financial means is not admissible until there has been a finding
13 of liability and that punitive damages under this Act are supportable under the
14 facts; authorizing a motor vehicle insurer to exclude coverage for an award of
15 punitive damages under this Act; providing that an exclusion of certain
16 coverage for punitive damages does not constitute a reduction in coverage by a
17 motor vehicle liability insurer; defining a certain term; providing for the
18 application of this Act; and generally relating to authorizing a finder of fact to
19 determine that a person who causes personal injury or wrongful death while
20 driving or attempting to drive with a certain alcohol concentration in the blood
21 or breath of the person was acting with malice and award punitive damages
22 under certain circumstances.

23 BY adding to
24 Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings
25 Section 10–913.1
26 Annotated Code of Maryland
27 (2006 Replacement Volume and 2010 Supplement)

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



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

3 **Article – Courts and Judicial Proceedings**

4 **10–913.1.**

5 (A) IN THIS SECTION, “MOTOR VEHICLE” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN
6 § 11–135 OF THE TRANSPORTATION ARTICLE.

7 (B) THIS SECTION DOES NOT AFFECT THE PROVISIONS OF:

8 (1) THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TORTS CLAIMS ACT UNDER TITLE
9 5, SUBTITLE 3 OF THIS ARTICLE; OR

10 (2) THE MARYLAND TORT CLAIMS ACT UNDER TITLE 12 OF THE
11 STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE.

12 (C) SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION, A FINDER OF FACT
13 MAY DETERMINE THAT A PERSON WHO CAUSES PERSONAL INJURY OR
14 WRONGFUL DEATH WAS ACTING WITH MALICE AND AWARD PUNITIVE DAMAGES
15 IF THE PERSON CAUSES PERSONAL INJURY OR WRONGFUL DEATH WHILE
16 DRIVING OR ATTEMPTING TO DRIVE A MOTOR VEHICLE:

17 (1) WHILE HAVING AN ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION OF 0.15 OR
18 MORE AS MEASURED BY GRAMS OF ALCOHOL PER 100 MILLILITERS OF BLOOD
19 OR GRAMS OF ALCOHOL PER 210 LITERS OF BREATH; OR

20 (2) WHILE HAVING AN ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION OF 0.08 OR
21 MORE AS MEASURED BY GRAMS OF ALCOHOL PER 100 MILLILITERS OF BLOOD
22 OR GRAMS OF ALCOHOL PER 210 LITERS OF BREATH, AND THE PERSON:

23 (i) WAS DRIVING OR ATTEMPTING TO DRIVE WHILE THE
24 PERSON’S LICENSE TO DRIVE WAS SUSPENDED OR REVOKED UNDER § 16–205 OF
25 THE TRANSPORTATION ARTICLE OR A COMPARABLE FEDERAL OR OTHER STATE
26 STATUTE;

27 (ii) WAS DRIVING OR ATTEMPTING TO DRIVE WHILE THE
28 PERSON’S LICENSE TO DRIVE WAS SUSPENDED UNDER § 16–205.1 OF THE
29 TRANSPORTATION ARTICLE OR A COMPARABLE FEDERAL OR OTHER STATE
30 STATUTE;

31 (iii) WAS DRIVING OR ATTEMPTING TO DRIVE WHILE THE
32 PERSON’S LICENSE TO DRIVE WAS SUSPENDED OR REVOKED FOR AN

1 ACCUMULATION OF POINTS UNDER § 16-402(A)(25), (33), OR (34) OF THE
2 TRANSPORTATION ARTICLE OR A COMPARABLE FEDERAL OR OTHER STATE
3 STATUTE; OR

4 (IV) WITHIN THE PAST 5 YEARS, WAS CONVICTED, ENTERED
5 A PLEA OF NOLO CONTENDERE, OR RECEIVED PROBATION BEFORE JUDGMENT
6 UNDER:

7 1. § 21-902 OF THE TRANSPORTATION ARTICLE;

8 2. § 2-503, § 2-504, § 2-505, § 2-506, OR § 3-211 OF
9 THE CRIMINAL LAW ARTICLE; OR

10 3. A COMPARABLE OFFENSE TO AN OFFENSE
11 SPECIFIED IN ITEM 1 OR 2 OF THIS ITEM UNDER A FEDERAL OR OTHER STATE
12 STATUTE.

13 (D) A CLAIM FOR PUNITIVE DAMAGES UNDER THIS SECTION:

14 (1) SHALL BE PLEADED, BY COMPLAINT OR AMENDMENT, WITH
15 FACTS SUPPORTING THE CLAIM WITH SUFFICIENT PARTICULARITY TO
16 ESTABLISH THAT THE PARTY MAY BE ENTITLED TO PUNITIVE DAMAGES UNDER
17 THIS SECTION;

18 (2) SHALL BE PROVED BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE;

19 (3) MAY NOT BE AWARDED IN THE ABSENCE OF AN AWARD OF
20 COMPENSATORY DAMAGES; AND

21 (4) SHALL COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF § 10-913 OF THIS
22 SUBTITLE.

23 (E) (1) A MOTOR VEHICLE LIABILITY INSURER MAY EXCLUDE
24 COVERAGE FOR PUNITIVE DAMAGES AWARDED UNDER THIS SECTION.

25 (2) AN EXCLUSION OF COVERAGE FOR PUNITIVE DAMAGES
26 UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A
27 REDUCTION IN COVERAGE BY THE MOTOR VEHICLE LIABILITY INSURER.

28 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall be
29 construed to apply only prospectively and may not be applied or interpreted to have
30 any effect on or application to any cause of action arising before the effective date of
31 this Act.

1 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
2 October 1, 2011.