

Chapter 731

(House Bill 452)

AN ACT concerning

**Individual Tax Preparers – Code of Ethics, Notification of Actions, Enforcement,
and Penalties
(Stop Scam Tax Preparers Act)**

FOR the purpose of requiring the State Board of Individual Tax Preparers, on or before a certain date, to publish on the Board's website a certain code of ethics and certain rules of professional conduct; requiring the Board to notify the Comptroller within a certain period of time of certain actions for violations of provisions of law governing individual tax preparers; requiring the Board to notify the Field Enforcement Bureau of the Comptroller's Office of certain ~~alleged~~ violations within a certain period of time; granting certain employees of the Bureau certain powers, duties, and responsibilities for enforcing laws pertaining to income tax preparation; requiring the Comptroller to notify the Board within a certain period of time if the Comptroller prohibits an income tax return preparer from submitting income tax returns electronically; prohibiting an income tax return preparer from preparing, assisting in preparing, or causing the preparation of an income tax return or claim for refund in a certain manner; requiring certain fines imposed under this Act to be paid to the Tax Clinics for Low-Income Marylanders Fund; and generally relating to income tax preparation.

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Business Occupations and Professions
Section 21-205(b)(1)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2018 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

BY adding to
Article – Business Occupations and Professions
Section 21-205(c)
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2018 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Business Occupations and Professions
Section 21-206 and 21-401
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2018 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
Article – Tax – General
Section 1-207(b) and (c)

Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
Article – Tax – General
Section 1–207(f), 2–107(a)(2)(ii), 10–824, and 13–1004
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2022 Replacement Volume and 2023 Supplement)

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

Article – Business Occupations and Professions

21–205.

(b) In addition to any duties set forth elsewhere, the Board shall:

(1) adopt rules of professional conduct as appropriate to establish a high standard of integrity and dignity for the practice of individual tax preparation;

(c) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2026, AFTER ALLOWING FOR PUBLIC INPUT BY THE TAX PREPARER COMMUNITY, THE BOARD SHALL PUBLISH ON THE BOARD’S WEBSITE A CODE OF ETHICS AND RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR ENGAGING IN THE PRACTICE OF INDIVIDUAL TAX PREPARATION.

21–206.

(a) The Board may investigate a complaint that alleges a violation of this title.

(b) On receipt of the results of an investigation made under this section, the Board shall promptly take action that is appropriate under this title to ensure compliance with this title.

(c) (1) If the Board concludes that conduct alleged to be in violation of this title will result in harm to a resident of the State, the Board may seek a permanent or temporary injunction with respect to the conduct from the circuit court of the county in which the alleged violation occurs.

(2) In seeking an injunction under this subsection, the Board is not required to:

(i) post bond;

(ii) allege or prove that an adequate remedy at law does not exist; or

(iii) allege or prove that substantial or irreparable damage would result from the continued violation.

(3) IF THE BOARD SEEKS AN INJUNCTION OR TAKES A DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST AN INDIVIDUAL FOR A VIOLATION OF THIS TITLE, THE BOARD SHALL NOTIFY THE COMPTROLLER WITHIN 5 BUSINESS DAYS AFTER TAKING THE ACTION.

~~[(3)]~~ (4) A member of the Board may not be held personally liable for action taken under this subsection in good faith with reasonable grounds.

(d) The Board, or a hearing officer designated by the Board, may administer oaths, hold hearings, and take testimony about all matters within the jurisdiction of the Board.

(e) (1) The Board or its designee may issue a subpoena for the attendance of a witness to testify or the production of evidence in connection with:

- (i) a disciplinary action brought under this title; or
- (ii) a proceeding brought for an alleged violation of this title.

(2) If an individual fails to comply with a subpoena issued under this subsection, on petition of the Board, a court of competent jurisdiction may compel compliance with the subpoena.

21-401.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this title, an individual may not provide, attempt to provide, or offer to provide individual tax preparation services in the State unless registered by the Board.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in this title, a person may not employ an individual to provide, attempt to provide, or offer to provide individual tax preparation services in the State unless the individual is registered by the Board.

(C) THE BOARD SHALL NOTIFY THE FIELD ENFORCEMENT BUREAU OF THE COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE OF ~~AN ALLEGED~~ A VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION WITHIN 5 BUSINESS DAYS AFTER ~~RECEIPT OF THE ALLEGATION~~ THE BOARD DETERMINES THAT THE VIOLATION HAS OCCURRED.

Article – Tax – General

1-207.

(b) There is a Tax Clinics for Low-Income Marylanders Fund.

(c) The purpose of the Fund is to provide grants to the University of Maryland School of Law, the University of Baltimore School of Law, and the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service to operate tax clinics for low-income Maryland residents.

(f) The Fund consists of:

(1) proceeds distributed to the Fund under § 17–317 of the Commercial Law Article;

(2) **FINES DISTRIBUTED TO THE FUND UNDER § 13–1004(C) OF THIS ARTICLE;**

(3) money appropriated in the State budget for the Fund; and

~~(3)~~ (4) any other money from any other source accepted for the benefit of the Fund.

2–107.

(a) Authorized employees of the Field Enforcement Bureau of the Comptroller’s Office:

(2) have all the powers, duties, and responsibilities of a peace officer for the purpose of enforcing the laws pertaining to:

(ii) income tax **AND INCOME TAX PREPARATION;**

10–824.

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

(2) (i) “Income tax return preparer” means a person who for compensation prepares a substantial portion or more of a qualified return or employs one or more persons to prepare for compensation a substantial portion or more of a qualified return.

(ii) “Income tax return preparer” does not include a person who merely performs those acts described under § 7701(a)(36)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(3) “Qualified return” means any original return of individual income tax imposed by this title, regardless of whether a tax is due or a refund is claimed.

(b) Except as otherwise provided in this section, an income tax return preparer shall file all qualified returns that the income tax return preparer prepares by electronic means as prescribed by the Comptroller if:

(1) for a taxable year beginning after December 31, 2008, but before January 1, 2010, the income tax return preparer has prepared more than 300 qualified returns in the prior taxable year;

(2) for a taxable year beginning after December 31, 2009, but before January 1, 2011, the income tax return preparer has prepared more than 200 qualified returns in the prior taxable year; and

(3) for any taxable year beginning after December 31, 2010, the income tax return preparer has prepared more than 100 qualified tax returns in the prior taxable year.

(c) Subsection (b) of this section does not apply to a qualified return if:

(1) the taxpayer has indicated on the qualified return that the taxpayer does not want the return filed by electronic means; or

(2) the income tax return preparer preparing the qualified return has requested and received a waiver from the Comptroller.

(d) On written request for a waiver by an income tax return preparer who is subject to subsection (b) of this section, the Comptroller may grant the income tax return preparer a waiver of the requirements of this section if the income tax return preparer is able to establish to the satisfaction of the Comptroller either reasonable cause for not filing the return by electronic means or that there is no feasible means of filing the return by electronic means without undue hardship.

(E) IF THE COMPTROLLER PROHIBITS AN INCOME TAX RETURN PREPARER FROM SUBMITTING INCOME TAX RETURNS ELECTRONICALLY, THE COMPTROLLER SHALL NOTIFY THE STATE BOARD OF INDIVIDUAL TAX PREPARERS ESTABLISHED UNDER TITLE 21 OF THE BUSINESS OCCUPATIONS AND PROFESSIONS ARTICLE WITHIN 5 BUSINESS DAYS AFTER TAKING THAT ACTION.

13-1004.

(a) An income tax return preparer who willfully prepares, assists in preparing, or causes the preparation of a false income tax return or claim for refund with fraudulent intent or the intent to evade income tax is guilty of a misdemeanor and, on conviction, is subject to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or imprisonment not exceeding 5 years or both.

(b) An income tax return preparer who willfully attempts to evade any tax imposed under this article or the payment thereof is guilty of a misdemeanor and, on conviction, is subject to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or imprisonment not exceeding 5 years or both.

(c) (1) AN INCOME TAX RETURN PREPARER MAY NOT WILLFULLY PREPARE, ASSIST IN PREPARING, OR CAUSE THE PREPARATION OF AN INCOME TAX RETURN OR CLAIM FOR REFUND WITHOUT BEING PROPERLY LICENSED OR REGISTERED TO PROVIDE INCOME TAX PREPARATION SERVICES IN THE STATE.

(2) A PERSON WHO VIOLATES PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IS GUILTY OF A MISDEMEANOR AND ON CONVICTION IS SUBJECT TO A FINE NOT EXCEEDING \$5,000 FOR EACH VIOLATION.

(3) EACH INCOME TAX RETURN OR CLAIM FOR REFUND THAT AN INCOME TAX PREPARER PREPARES, ASSISTS IN PREPARING, OR CAUSES THE PREPARATION OF IN VIOLATION OF PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IS A SEPARATE VIOLATION.

(4) EACH FINE IMPOSED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE PAID INTO THE TAX CLINICS FOR LOW-INCOME MARYLANDERS FUND ESTABLISHED UNDER § 1-207 OF THIS ARTICLE.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2024.

Approved by the Governor, May 16, 2024.