



Maryland Association for Justice, Inc.

2021 Position Paper

MAJ Position In Support of HB 308 / SB 162- Courts – Jury Service – Disqualification

Courts – Civil Actions – SLAPP -- SUPPORT

The Maryland Associations for Justice (MAJ) supports HB 308 and SB 162 which modernize the existing SLAPP statute, Courts §5-807, by modifying Maryland's law to be consistent with other SLAPP statutes in other jurisdictions.

During the shortened 2020 Legislature, the MAJ worked with Del. Rosenberg and other supporters to modify the then-proposed SLAPP bill to modify and improve it. HB308 and SB 162 incorporate those changes.

SLAPP actions are, as the acronym implies, a strategic lawsuit against public participation. Some litigants file a SLAPP lawsuit intended to suppress a citizen's expressing free speech and criticism. SLAPP statutes exist in 29 states to protect people from lawsuits that have a purpose of suppressing free speech by providing grounds for dismissal, expedited motions to dismiss, and awards of attorney's fees against the filing party. See <https://anti-slapp.org/your-states-free-speech-protection/#scorecard> [pdf 10/24/2017, attached].

HB 308 and SB 162 update the Maryland law to provide better protection for free speech rights by discouraging litigants from commencing a lawsuit with the suppressive intent.

The MAJ requests a FAVORABLE Committee Report.