



Maryland Chamber of Commerce

Legislative Position

**SB 118
SB 119
OPPOSE**

**Judicial
Proceedings
Committee
2/2/10**

SB 118 and SB 119

Jury Trials – Amount in Controversy

Bill Summary: These bills would raise the threshold at which a party in a civil suit may demand a jury trial from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

Chamber Position: The Maryland Chamber of Commerce opposes these bills because they would limit the constitutional right of persons to a jury trial and inflate the cost of claims made against businesses when they are sued. Maryland's longstanding constitutional guarantee of a right to a jury trial should not be altered without compelling evidence and justification. However, there have been no studies showing the need to raise, or double, this dollar limit less than four years after the current threshold was approved by the voters.

Shifting additional cases from the Circuit Court to the District Court will make it more difficult for businesses to defend themselves, due to the limited discovery and motions processes available in the District Court. Amounts for which businesses are sued are also likely to be inflated, as plaintiffs would be able to double the amount of damages claimed without having to have the case fully litigated in the Circuit Court. Higher damages claimed will in turn raise insurance costs for businesses.

For these reasons, we urge an unfavorable report for these bills.

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