



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB4095

Introduced 10/15/2025, by Rep. Terra Costa Howard

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

735 ILCS 5/5-105

from Ch. 110, par. 5-105

Amends the Costs Article of the Code of Civil Procedure. Provides that any party seeking a waiver of fees, costs, or charges or seeking to use a previously ordered waiver of fees, costs, or charges shall provide proper notice to all other parties and attorneys of record prior to presenting the application for the waiver of fees, costs, or charges to the court and the court shall not enter an order for a waiver of fees, costs, or charges unless the applicant shows proof of proper notice. Provides that the waiver of fees, costs, or charges shall not automatically apply to fees, costs, or charges ordered or required to be paid for specified fees and costs under the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act but shall instead be considered by the court in each individual case. Effective immediately.

LRB104 14631 LNS 27773 b

1 AN ACT concerning civil law.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Code of Civil Procedure is amended by
5 changing Section 5-105 as follows:

6 (735 ILCS 5/5-105) (from Ch. 110, par. 5-105)

7 Sec. 5-105. Waiver of court fees, costs, and charges.

8 (a) As used in this Section:

9 (1) "Fees, costs, and charges" means payments imposed
10 on a party in connection with the prosecution or defense
11 of a civil action, including, but not limited to: fees set
12 forth in Section 27.1b of the Clerks of Courts Act; fees
13 for service of process and other papers served either
14 within or outside this State, including service by
15 publication pursuant to Section 2-206 of this Code and
16 publication of necessary legal notices; motion fees;
17 charges for participation in, or attendance at, any
18 mandatory process or procedure including, but not limited
19 to, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, counseling,
20 evaluation, "Children First", "Focus on Children" or
21 similar programs; fees for supplementary proceedings;
22 charges for translation services; guardian ad litem fees;
23 and all other processes and procedures deemed by the court

1 to be necessary to commence, prosecute, defend, or enforce
2 relief in a civil action.

3 (2) "Indigent person" means any person who meets one
4 or more of the following criteria:

5 (i) He or she is receiving assistance under one or
6 more of the following means-based governmental public
7 benefits programs: Supplemental Security Income (SSI),
8 Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (AABD), Temporary
9 Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental
10 Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), General
11 Assistance, Transitional Assistance, or State Children
12 and Family Assistance.

13 (ii) His or her available personal income is 125%
14 or less of the current poverty level, unless the
15 applicant's assets that are not exempt under Part 9 or
16 10 of Article XII of this Code are of a nature and
17 value that the court determines that the applicant is
18 able to pay the fees, costs, and charges.

19 (iii) He or she is, in the discretion of the court,
20 unable to proceed in an action without payment of
21 fees, costs, and charges and whose payment of those
22 fees, costs, and charges would result in substantial
23 hardship to the person or his or her family.

24 (iv) He or she is an indigent person pursuant to
25 Section 5-105.5 of this Code.

26 (3) "Poverty level" means the current poverty level as

1 established by the United States Department of Health and
2 Human Services.

3 (b) On the application of any person, before or after the
4 commencement of an action:

5 (1) If the court finds that the applicant is an
6 indigent person, the court shall grant the applicant a
7 full fees, costs, and charges waiver entitling him or her
8 to sue or defend the action without payment of any of the
9 fees, costs, and charges.

10 (2) If the court finds that the applicant satisfies
11 any of the criteria contained in items (i), (ii), or (iii)
12 of this subdivision (b)(2), the court shall grant the
13 applicant a partial fees, costs, and charges waiver
14 entitling him or her to sue or defend the action upon
15 payment of the applicable percentage of the assessments,
16 costs, and charges of the action, as follows:

17 (i) the court shall waive 75% of all fees, costs,
18 and charges if the available income of the applicant
19 is greater than 125% but does not exceed 150% of the
20 poverty level, unless the assets of the applicant that
21 are not exempt under Part 9 or 10 of Article XII of
22 this Code are such that the applicant is able, without
23 undue hardship, to pay a greater portion of the fees,
24 costs, and charges;

25 (ii) the court shall waive 50% of all fees, costs,
26 and charges if the available income is greater than

1 150% but does not exceed 175% of the poverty level,
2 unless the assets of the applicant that are not exempt
3 under Part 9 or 10 of Article XII of this Code are such
4 that the applicant is able, without undue hardship, to
5 pay a greater portion of the fees, costs, and charges;
6 and

7 (iii) the court shall waive 25% of all fees,
8 costs, and charges if the available income of the
9 applicant is greater than 175% but does not exceed
10 200% of the current poverty level, unless the assets
11 of the applicant that are not exempt under Part 9 or 10
12 of Article XII of this Code are such that the applicant
13 is able, without undue hardship, to pay a greater
14 portion of the fees, costs, and charges.

15 (c) An application for waiver of court fees, costs, and
16 charges shall be in writing and signed by the applicant, or, if
17 the applicant is a minor or an incompetent adult, by another
18 person having knowledge of the facts. The contents of the
19 application for waiver of court fees, costs, and charges, and
20 the procedure for the decision of the applications, shall be
21 established by Supreme Court Rule. Factors to consider in
22 evaluating an application shall include:

23 (1) the applicant's receipt of needs based
24 governmental public benefits, including Supplemental
25 Security Income (SSI); Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled
26 (AABD); Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);

1 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or "food
2 stamps"); General Assistance; Transitional Assistance; or
3 State Children and Family Assistance;

4 (2) the employment status of the applicant and amount
5 of monthly income, if any;

6 (3) income received from the applicant's pension,
7 Social Security benefits, unemployment benefits, and other
8 sources;

9 (4) income received by the applicant from other
10 household members;

11 (5) the applicant's monthly expenses, including rent,
12 home mortgage, other mortgage, utilities, food, medical,
13 vehicle, childcare, debts, child support, and other
14 expenses; and

15 (6) financial affidavits or other similar supporting
16 documentation provided by the applicant showing that
17 payment of the imposed fees, costs, and charges would
18 result in substantial hardship to the applicant or the
19 applicant's family.

20 (c-5) The court shall provide, through the office of the
21 clerk of the court, the application for waiver of court fees,
22 costs, and charges to any person seeking to sue or defend an
23 action who indicates an inability to pay the fees, costs, and
24 charges of the action. The clerk of the court shall post in a
25 conspicuous place in the courthouse a notice no smaller than
26 8.5 x 11 inches, using no smaller than 30-point typeface

1 printed in English and in Spanish, advising the public that
2 they may ask the court for permission to sue or defend a civil
3 action without payment of fees, costs, and charges. The notice
4 shall be substantially as follows:

5 "If you are unable to pay the fees, costs, and charges
6 of an action you may ask the court to allow you to proceed
7 without paying them. Ask the clerk of the court for
8 forms."

9 (d) (Blank).

10 (e) The clerk of the court shall not refuse to accept and
11 file any complaint, appearance, or other paper presented by
12 the applicant if accompanied by an application for waiver of
13 court fees, costs, and charges, and those papers shall be
14 considered filed on the date the application is presented. If
15 the application is denied or a partial fees, costs, and
16 charges waiver is granted, the order shall state a date
17 certain by which the necessary fees, costs, and charges must
18 be paid. For good cause shown, the court may allow an applicant
19 who receives a partial fees, costs, and charges waiver to
20 defer payment of fees, costs, and charges, make installment
21 payments, or make payment upon reasonable terms and conditions
22 stated in the order. The court may dismiss the claims or strike
23 the defenses of any party failing to pay the fees, costs, and
24 charges within the time and in the manner ordered by the court.
25 A judicial ruling on an application for waiver of court
26 assessments does not constitute a decision of a substantial

1 issue in the case under Section 2-1001 of this Code.

2 (f) The order granting a full or partial fees, costs, and
3 charges waiver shall expire after one year. Upon expiration of
4 the waiver, or a reasonable period of time before expiration,
5 the party whose fees, costs, and charges were waived may file
6 another application for waiver and the court shall consider
7 the application in accordance with the applicable Supreme
8 Court Rule.

9 (f-5) If, before or at the time of final disposition of the
10 case, the court obtains information, including information
11 from the court file, suggesting that a person whose fees,
12 costs, and charges were initially waived was not entitled to a
13 full or partial waiver at the time of application, the court
14 may require the person to appear at a court hearing by giving
15 the applicant no less than 10 days' written notice of the
16 hearing and the specific reasons why the initial waiver might
17 be reconsidered. The court may require the applicant to
18 provide reasonably available evidence, including financial
19 information, to support his or her eligibility for the waiver,
20 but the court shall not require submission of information that
21 is unrelated to the criteria for eligibility and application
22 requirements set forth in subdivision (b) (1) or (b) (2) of this
23 Section. If the court finds that the person was not initially
24 entitled to any waiver, the person shall pay all fees, costs,
25 and charges relating to the civil action, including any
26 previously waived fees, costs, and charges. The order may

1 state terms of payment in accordance with subsection (e). The
2 court shall not conduct a hearing under this subsection more
3 often than once every 6 months.

4 (f-10) If, before or at the time of final disposition of
5 the case, the court obtains information, including information
6 from the court file, suggesting that a person who received a
7 full or partial waiver has experienced a change in financial
8 condition so that he or she is no longer eligible for that
9 waiver, the court may require the person to appear at a court
10 hearing by giving the applicant no less than 10 days' written
11 notice of the hearing and the specific reasons why the waiver
12 might be reconsidered. The court may require the person to
13 provide reasonably available evidence, including financial
14 information, to support his or her continued eligibility for
15 the waiver, but shall not require submission of information
16 that is unrelated to the criteria for eligibility and
17 application requirements set forth in subdivisions (b)(1) and
18 (b)(2) of this Section. If the court enters an order finding
19 that the person is no longer entitled to a waiver, or is
20 entitled to a partial waiver different than that which the
21 person had previously received, the person shall pay the
22 requisite fees, costs, and charges from the date of the order
23 going forward. The order may state terms of payment in
24 accordance with subsection (e) of this Section. The court
25 shall not conduct a hearing under this subsection more often
26 than once every 6 months.

1 (g) A court, in its discretion, may appoint counsel to
2 represent an indigent person, and that counsel shall perform
3 his or her duties without fees, charges, or reward.

4 (h) Nothing in this Section shall be construed to affect
5 the right of a party to sue or defend an action in forma
6 pauperis without the payment of fees, costs, charges, or the
7 right of a party to court-appointed counsel, as authorized by
8 any other provision of law or by the rules of the Illinois
9 Supreme Court. Nothing in this Section shall be construed to
10 limit the authority of a court to order another party to the
11 action to pay the fees, costs, and charges of the action.

12 (h-5) If a party is represented by a civil legal services
13 provider or an attorney in a court-sponsored pro bono program
14 as defined in Section 5-105.5 of this Code, the attorney
15 representing that party shall file a certification with the
16 court in accordance with Supreme Court Rule 298 and that party
17 shall be allowed to sue or defend without payment of fees,
18 costs, and charges without filing an application under this
19 Section.

20 (h-10) (Blank).

21 (h-15) Any party seeking a waiver of fees, costs, or
22 charges or seeking to use a previously ordered waiver of fees,
23 costs, or charges shall provide proper notice to all other
24 parties and attorneys of record prior to presenting the
25 application for the waiver of fees, costs, or charges to the
26 court and the court shall not enter an order for a waiver of

1 fees, costs, or charges unless the applicant shows proof of
2 proper notice. The waiver of fees, costs, or charges
3 authorized by this subsection shall not automatically apply to
4 fees, costs, or charges ordered or required to be paid for
5 attorney's fees and costs incurred by an individual appointed
6 under Section 506 of the Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of
7 Marriage Act, any evaluation costs under Section 604.10 of the
8 Illinois Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act, or any
9 counseling costs ordered under Section 607.6 of the Illinois
10 Marriage and Dissolution of Marriage Act but shall instead be
11 considered by the court in each individual case.

12 (i) The provisions of this Section are severable under
13 Section 1.31 of the Statute on Statutes.

14 (Source: P.A. 101-36, eff. 6-28-19; 102-558, eff. 8-20-21.)

15 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon
16 becoming law.