



State of Wisconsin  
2019 - 2020 LEGISLATURE

LRB-0873/1  
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## 2019 ASSEMBLY BILL 396

September 5, 2019 - Introduced by Representatives SINICKI, ZAMARRIPA, VRUWINK, VINING, C. TAYLOR, SUBECK, STUCK, STUBBS, SPREITZER, SHANKLAND, SARGENT, RIEMER, POPE, OHNSTAD, NEUBAUER, L. MYERS, MILROY, B. MEYERS, MCGUIRE, KOLSTE, HINTZ, HESSELBEIN, HEBL, HAYWOOD, GRUSZYNSKI, GOYKE, FIELDS, EMERSON, DOYLE, CROWLEY, CONSIDINE, CABRERA, BROSTOFF, BOWEN, BILLINGS and ANDERSON, cosponsored by Senators HANSEN, BEWLEY, CARPENTER, ERPENBACH, JOHNSON, LARSON, MILLER, RINGHAND, RISSER, SCHACHTNER, SHILLING, SMITH, L. TAYLOR and WIRCH. Referred to Committee on Judiciary.

1     **AN ACT to amend** 111.39 (4) (d), 111.39 (5) (b) and 814.04 (intro.); and **to create**  
2           111.39 (5) (d) and 111.397 of the statutes; **relating to:** actions in circuit court  
3           alleging discrimination in employment, unfair honesty testing, or unfair  
4           genetic testing.

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### *Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau*

This bill allows the Department of Workforce Development or an individual who is alleged or was found to have been discriminated against or subjected to unfair honesty or genetic testing to bring an action in circuit court in addition to or in lieu of filing an administrative complaint. The bill does not allow such an action for damages to be brought against a local governmental unit or against an employer that employs fewer than 15 individuals.

Under the bill, if the circuit court finds that a defendant has committed an act of discrimination or unfair honesty or genetic testing, the circuit court may award back pay and any other relief that could have been awarded in an administrative proceeding. In addition, the circuit court must order the defendant to pay to the individual discriminated against compensatory and punitive damages that the circuit court finds appropriate, except that the total amount of damage awarded for future economic losses and for pain and suffering, emotional distress, mental anguish, loss of enjoyment of life, and other noneconomic losses and punitive damages is subject to the following limitations:

1. If the defendant employs 100 or fewer employees, no more than \$50,000.

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2. If the defendant employs more than 100 but fewer than 201 employees, no more than \$100,000.

3. If the defendant employs more than 200 but fewer than 501 employees, no more than \$200,000.

4. If the defendant employs more than 500 employees, no more than \$300,000.

The bill requires DWD to annually revise these amounts based upon the change in the consumer price index in the previous year, if any positive change has occurred.

Under current fair employment law, an individual who alleges discrimination in employment or unfair honesty or genetic testing may file a complaint with DWD seeking action that will effectuate the purpose of the fair employment law, including reinstating the employee, providing back pay, and paying costs and attorney fees.

For further information see the *state* fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

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***The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:***

1           **SECTION 1.** 111.39 (4) (d) of the statutes is amended to read:

2           111.39 (4) (d) The department shall serve a certified copy of the findings and  
3 order on the respondent, the order to have the same force as other orders of the  
4 department and be enforced as provided in s. 103.005. The department shall also  
5 serve a certified copy of the findings and order on the complainant, together with a  
6 notice advising the complainant about the right to seek, and the time for seeking,  
7 review by the commission under sub. (5); about the right to bring, and the time for  
8 bringing, an action for judicial review under s. 111.395; and about the right to bring,  
9 and the time for bringing, an action under s. 111.397 (1) (a). Any person aggrieved  
10 by noncompliance with the order may have the order enforced specifically by suit in  
11 equity. If the examiner finds that the respondent has not engaged in discrimination,  
12 unfair honesty testing, or unfair genetic testing as alleged in the complaint, the  
13 department shall serve a certified copy of the examiner's findings served on the  
14 complainant, ~~together with~~ shall be accompanied by an order dismissing the  
15 complaint.

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1           **SECTION 2.** 111.39 (5) (b) of the statutes is amended to read:

2           111.39 (5) (b) If ~~no petition is filed~~ the respondent or complainant does not file  
3 a petition under par. (a) within 21 days from the date that a copy of the findings and  
4 order of the examiner is ~~mailed to the last-known address of the respondent~~ served  
5 on that party, the findings and order shall be considered final for purposes of  
6 enforcement under sub. (4) (d). If a timely petition is filed, the commission, on review,  
7 may either affirm, reverse, or modify the findings or order in whole or in part, or set  
8 aside the findings and order and remand to the department for further proceedings.  
9 Such actions shall be based on a review of the evidence submitted. If the commission  
10 is satisfied that a respondent or complainant has been prejudiced because of  
11 exceptional delay in the receipt of a copy of any findings and order, ~~it~~ the commission  
12 may extend the time another 21 days for filing the petition with the department.

13           **SECTION 3.** 111.39 (5) (d) of the statutes is created to read:

14           111.39 (5) (d) The commission shall serve a certified copy of the commission's  
15 decision on the respondent. The commission shall also serve a certified copy of the  
16 commission's decision on the complainant, together with a notice advising the  
17 complainant about the right to bring, and the time for bringing, an action for judicial  
18 review under s. 111.395 and about the right to bring, and the time for bringing, an  
19 action under s. 111.397 (1) (a).

20           **SECTION 4.** 111.397 of the statutes is created to read:

21           **111.397 Civil action.** (1) (a) Except as provided in this paragraph, the  
22 department or an individual alleged or found to have been discriminated against or  
23 subjected to unfair honesty testing or unfair genetic testing may bring an action in  
24 circuit court requesting the relief described in sub. (2) (a) against an employer, labor  
25 organization, or employment agency that is alleged or found to have engaged in that

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1 discrimination, unfair honesty testing, or unfair genetic testing. The department or  
2 an individual alleged or found to have been discriminated against or subjected to  
3 unfair honesty testing or unfair genetic testing may not bring an action under this  
4 paragraph against a local governmental unit, as defined in s. 19.42 (7u), or against  
5 an employer, labor organization, or employment agency that employs fewer than 15  
6 individuals for each working day in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current  
7 or preceding year.

8 (b) If a petition for judicial review of the findings and order of the commission  
9 concerning the same violation as the violation giving rise to the action under par. (a)  
10 is filed, the circuit court shall consolidate the proceeding for judicial review and the  
11 action under par. (a).

12 (c) An individual alleged or found to have been discriminated against or  
13 subjected to unfair honesty testing or unfair genetic testing is not required to file a  
14 complaint under s. 111.39 or seek review under s. 111.395 in order for the department  
15 or the individual to bring an action under par. (a).

16 **(2)** (a) Subject to pars. (b) and (c), in an action under sub. (1) (a), if the circuit  
17 court finds that discrimination, unfair honesty testing, or unfair genetic testing has  
18 occurred, or if such a finding has been made by an examiner or the commission and  
19 not been further appealed, the circuit court may order any relief that an examiner  
20 would be empowered to order under s. 111.39 (4) (c) after a hearing on a complaint  
21 filed under s. 111.39. In addition, the circuit court shall order the defendant to pay  
22 to the individual discriminated against or subjected to unfair honesty testing or  
23 unfair genetic testing any other compensatory damages, and punitive damages  
24 under s. 895.043 that the circuit court or jury finds appropriate, plus reasonable costs  
25 and attorney fees incurred in the action. If any relief was ordered under s. 111.39 or

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1 111.395, the circuit court shall specify whether the relief ordered under this  
2 paragraph is in addition to or replaces the relief ordered under s. 111.39 or 111.395.  
3 The sum of the amount of compensatory damages for future economic losses and for  
4 pain and suffering, emotional distress, mental anguish, loss of enjoyment of life, and  
5 other noneconomic losses and the amount of punitive damages that a circuit court  
6 may order may not exceed the following:

7 1. In the case of a defendant that employs 100 or fewer employees for each  
8 working day in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding year,  
9 \$50,000.

10 2. In the case of a defendant that employs more than 100 but fewer than 201  
11 employees for each working day in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current  
12 or preceding year, \$100,000.

13 3. In the case of a defendant that employs more than 200 but fewer than 501  
14 employees for each working day in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current  
15 or preceding year, \$200,000.

16 4. In the case of a defendant that employs more than 500 employees for each  
17 working day in each of 20 or more calendar weeks in the current or preceding year,  
18 \$300,000.

19 (b) If the circuit court orders a payment under par. (a) because of a violation of  
20 s. 111.321, 111.37, or 111.372 by an individual employed by an employer, the  
21 employer of that individual is liable for the payment.

22 (c) 1. In this paragraph, "consumer price index" means the average of the  
23 consumer price index for all urban consumers, U.S. city average, as determined by  
24 the bureau of labor statistics of the federal department of labor.

