



Catherine A. Hanrahan

Partner

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Baltimore, MD

Catherine Hanrahan has broad experience litigating in federal and state courts in Maryland and the District of Columbia with emphasis on the defense of health care providers. In addition to complex tort and general casualty matters, she has experience in professional liability defense and product liability and toxic tort litigation. Cathy also has defended clients in class actions and False Claim Act matters, and in license disputes with licensing boards over the submission for payment of health services to Medicaid.

Early in her career, Cathy was a lead attorney on one of the first “sick building” cases ever tried. She also represented insurers in major coverage disputes with respect to environmental pollution claims.

Cathy tackles each new case with enthusiasm, backed by the stamina to take it to a successful conclusion. As her clients know, there are no half measures in Cathy’s practice and they appreciate her vast experience as well as her innovative strategies and solutions.

Professional and Community Activities

Cathy is active in a variety of charitable endeavors and has served as secretary of the Victory Youth Centers, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to building youth centers throughout the Washington metropolitan region. She is a member of the board of trustees of her high school and has coached in youth basketball leagues for 15 years.

Medical Malpractice

Cathy has been involved with multimillion-dollar medical malpractice trials on behalf of physicians and health care institutions. In addition to defending physicians, she represents dentists, nurses, paramedics, podiatrists, pathologists, counselors, social workers and other members of the allied health professions.

Class Actions

Services

- Design Professionals
- Complex Tort & General Casualty
- Medical Malpractice & Health Care
- Product Liability, Prevention & Government Compliance
- Transportation

Cathy was one of the lead attorneys who represented a national health care company sued for alleged violations of statutes governing drug testing for employment. She and her fellow partners successfully argued a motion to dismiss filed in federal court, which contended the purported class failed to state a claim.

Products Liability

Cathy has handled several product cases in which the allegations centered on design and manufacturing failures. At issue in Cathy's cases have been appliances such as coffee makers and portable air conditioner units for recreational vehicles and automobiles.

Complex Tort and General Casualty

Cathy has defended property owners and management companies in claims alleging inadequate security and catastrophic matters. She also has defended store owners, franchisees and franchisors in matters claiming personal injury.

Trucking, Transportation & Cargo

Cathy has defended national and regional transport carriers, including commuter bus companies and trucking companies, in the Maryland and District of Columbia courts. She has tried cases claiming catastrophic injury and death allegedly caused by the negligent operation of tractor-trailers and commuter buses, which matters have also alleged failing to comply with statutory requirements.

Architects & Engineers / Construction

Cathy is experienced in handling a variety of professional liability claims, including those brought against architects and engineers. The construction claims she handles are primarily delay claims or Fair Housing Act violations stemming from the design of multiple-unit residential complexes.

Real Estate Agents & Brokers Liability

Cathy has represented real estate agents and brokers in matters involving the appropriateness of the broker and agent acting as both the seller's and buyer's agent. She has also handled cases involving the appropriateness of the selling price or offer for properties. In addition, Cathy has addressed questions related to the disclosure statement in the sale of a property, as well as issues pertaining to mold. She has also represented miscellaneous professionals, such as home inspectors, where there were questions addressing the adequacy of termite inspections and termite treatment.

Toxic Tort

Cathy's toxic tort experience began early in her career with the first "sick building" case tried in the Washington Metropolitan area. She continued her work in the area of toxic tort in cases alleging injury due to lead exposure. More recently, she handled multiple claims where it was alleged numerous individuals suffered permanent brain damage from exposure to carbon monoxide.

Education

- University of Baltimore School of Law (J.D., 1985)
- James Madison University (B.S., 1981)

Bar Admissions

- Maryland
- District of Columbia

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court, District of Columbia
- U.S. District Court, District of Maryland

Professional Affiliations

- Maryland State Bar Association
- District of Columbia Bar Association, past co-chair, Tort and Insurance Practice Section
- Defense Research Institute (DRI)

Awards & Honors

- Selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America®*, 2023-2026
- Selected for inclusion in *The Best Lawyers in America® Women in Law*, 2025
- AV® Preeminent™ Rated by Martindale-Hubbell
- Rated by Martindale-Hubbell as a Washington, DC and Baltimore Top Rated Lawyer, 2012-2018
- America's Top 100 High Stakes Litigators, Maryland 2018

Representative Matters

Represented a health care provider before the licensing board investigating the diagnosis and treatment of recurrent memories.

Represented a security company in a wrongful death suit of a young mother who was shot and killed at her apartment complex.

Represented a management company of a hotel and restaurant complex where it was alleged multiple employees of the restaurant suffered permanent brain damage from carbon monoxide.

Client Wins

Hanrahan and Choren Persuade Court to Grant Dispositive Motion in Campus Assault Case

Catherine Hanrahan (Partner-Washington, DC) and Pernell Choren (Of Counsel-Washington, DC) obtained dismissal of an eleven-count complaint in the Superior Court of

the District of Columbia, on behalf of two entities affiliated with a local university's student housing operations. The case arose from a horrific sexual assault that occurred on campus in August of 2022. The plaintiffs sued Wilson Elser's clients, asserting a wide range of claims, including negligent hiring, negligent supervision, negligent retention, vicarious liability, respondeat superior, intentional infliction of emotional distress, failure to provide a safe workplace, negligence per se, breach of bond, loss of consortium, and joint enterprise liability – and sought \$1.5 million in damages.

Catherine and Perry filed a comprehensive motion to dismiss, adopting and incorporating three prior motions to dismiss from a predecessor case and crafting detailed arguments demonstrating that the plaintiffs failed to plead any facts establishing that their clients, rather than the staffing company that employed both the victim and the assailant, had any responsibility for hiring, supervising, or controlling the perpetrator. They further established that the staffing company maintained "absolute and exclusive" authority over concierge personnel, and that the plaintiffs themselves had admitted in their prior lawsuit that the assailant was employed and paid by an entirely different entity. In a detailed nine-page order, the Court found Wilson Elser's arguments persuasive and ruled that all the plaintiffs' claims were barred by collateral estoppel based on the court's prior dismissal order in the related action. Accordingly, the court granted the motion and dismissed all of the plaintiffs' claims with prejudice.

Hanrahan, Farrell & Creps Secure Summary Judgment on Plaintiff's Breach of Contract Claim

Washington, D.C., partners Catherine Hanrahan and Kevin Farrell and associate Madeline Creps won summary judgment in favor of the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA). The plaintiff community association claimed that DCHA and other entities failed to pay assessments owed pursuant to the Declaration and Bylaws that govern the development. After successfully barring the equitable claims filed against DCHA in a motion to dismiss, a motion for summary judgment was filed on the one remaining breach of contract count. DCHA argued that the claim failed as a matter of law because the Declaration unambiguously waived DCHA's liability for assessments. In opposition, the plaintiff argued there were contradictory clauses in the Declaration that a jury must reconcile. The Superior Court of the District of Columbia determined that DCHA was entitled to judgment in its favor as a matter of law, finding that there was no ambiguity in the language of the Declaration and opining that while DCHA is the legal owner in fee simple of the Community and Daycare Lot at issue, the Declaration's definition of "owner" as it is used throughout the Declaration plainly excludes DCHA. The court concluded that because the plain language of the agreement unambiguously waives DCHA's responsibility for paying assessments, the plaintiff's breach of contract claim fails as a matter of law, and granted our Motion for Summary Judgment. This is a significant win for DCHA because the legal issues resolved in this matter potentially impact its obligations in many other affordable housing development projects.

Hanrahan & Davis Win on Multiple Failures to Prove Service

Catherine Hanrahan (Partner-Washington, DC) and Stuart Davis (Associate-Washington, DC) won an appeal before the District of Columbia Court of Appeals on behalf of a dental practice and one of its dentists after filing a motion to dismiss plaintiff's complaint for improper service. D.C.'s highest court affirmed the trial court's decision to dismiss the

complaint due to the plaintiff's multiple failures to prove service pursuant to Super. Ct. Civ. Rule 4. The Court's opinion relied on substantial portions of Catherine and Stuart's briefing, particularly the argument that actual notice of a claim is immaterial to the sufficiency of service of process. The appellate win not only saved the client needless litigation expenses but also provides a road map to effectively oppose similar deficient service of process cases in the future.

Hanrahan & Choren Persuade D.C. Superior Court to Grant Dispositive Motion

Catherine Hanrahan (Partner-Washington, DC) and Pernell "Perry" Choren (Senior Associate-Washington, DC) obtained dismissal of the plaintiff's Complaint in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on behalf of a local government agency and one of its employees after filing a motion to dismiss based on the plaintiff's failure to provide timely pre-litigation notice. Catherine and Perry filed a motion to dismiss that argued that the plaintiff's Complaint must be dismissed for her failure to comply with the strict notice requirements of D.C. Code § 6-205(a). In an oral ruling, the Court found Catherine and Perry's arguments persuasive and ruled that the plaintiff's Complaint is barred by her failure to provide compliant § 6-205(a) before filing suit. Accordingly, the court granted the motion and dismissed the plaintiff's claims. This is the seventh dismissal that Catherine and Perry have secured on behalf of this same client in the past year and a half.

Hanrahan and Choren Persuade Plaintiff's Counsel to Voluntarily Dismiss Case Based on Pending Motion to Dismiss

Catherine Hanrahan (Partner-Washington, DC) and Pernell "Perry" Choren (Senior Associate-Washington, DC) recently persuaded plaintiff's counsel to voluntarily dismiss all claims asserted against their client after filing a motion to dismiss based on the plaintiff's failure to provide timely pre-litigation notice. Their client, a local government agency, was sued pertaining to the operation and management of a large residential property. Catherine and Perry filed a motion to dismiss that argued the plaintiff's complaint must be dismissed for her failure to comply with the strict notice requirements of D.C. Code § 6-205(a). Plaintiff's counsel found Catherine and Perry's arguments persuasive and agreed to voluntarily dismiss all claims with prejudice. This is the sixth dismissal that Catherine and Perry have secured on behalf of this same client this calendar year.

Hanrahan and Choren Successfully Argue Statute of Limitations, D.C. Code § 6-205(a) and Rule 12(b)(6) Defenses to Secure Complaint Dismissal

Catherine Hanrahan (Partner-Washington, DC) and Pernell "Perry" Choren (Senior Associate-Washington, DC) obtained dismissal in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on behalf of a local government agency that was sued pertaining to the operation and management of a large residential property. Catherine and Perry argued that the plaintiff's Complaint (1) was duplicative of allegations she was arguing in related litigation; (2) must be dismissed for the plaintiff's failure to comply with the strict notice requirements of D.C. Code § 6-205(a); and (3) to the extent she was alleging equitable and/or contractual claims within, must be barred by the doctrine of laches and the applicable statute of limitations. In a written decision, the court found Catherine and Perry's arguments persuasive and ruled that the plaintiff's Complaint is barred by the applicable statute of limitations, for the plaintiff's failure to provide compliant § 6-205(a) before filing suit, and because her allegations are likely being addressed in the aforementioned related litigation. Accordingly, the court granted the Motion to Dismiss and

dismissed the plaintiff's claims with prejudice. This is the fifth dispositive motion victory that Catherine and Perry have achieved on behalf of this same client this calendar year.

Hanrahan and Choren Successfully Argue D.C. Code § 6-205(a) Defense and Secure Claim Dismissal

Catherine Hanrahan (Partner-Washington, DC) and Pernell "Perry" Choren (Associate-Washington, DC) obtained dismissal in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on behalf of a local government agency sued for allegations of negligence pertaining to the operation and management of a large residential property. The court's primary focus was on the sufficiency of the plaintiff's mandatory written notice of claim pursuant to D.C. Code § 6-205(a). In their Motion to Dismiss, Catherine and Perry argued that neither of the plaintiff's alleged § 6-205 notices were submitted to the correct individual at the agency as set forth in the statute. Additionally, they argued that the plaintiff was too vague in describing the time that she was injured and the location of the alleged incident. The court initially granted the Motion to Dismiss, but provided the plaintiff with the opportunity to file an Amended Complaint and further support how she was compliant with § 6-205.

Catherine and Perry renewed their Motion to Dismiss, fully briefed by both parties, and the court held a remote motion hearing. In an oral ruling from the bench, the court found Catherine and Perry's arguments persuasive and ruled that the plaintiff failed to produce evidence demonstrating that she timely provided the mandatory written notice of claim to the correct individual at the agency. Additionally, the court correctly ruled that actual notice by the agency is not a consideration in a § 6-205 analysis. Accordingly, the court granted the Motion to Dismiss.

Hanrahan, Warshauer and Choren Successfully Defend Local Government Agency

Catherine Hanrahan (Partner-Washington, DC) and DC associates Evan Warshauer and Pernell Choren obtained summary judgment in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on behalf of a local government agency sued for allegations of negligence and breach of contract pertaining to the management of the plaintiff's apartment. The court's primary focus was on the sufficiency of plaintiff's mandatory notice of claim pursuant to D.C. Code § 6-205(a). In their Motion to Dismiss, Catherine, Evan and Perry argued that not only were all of plaintiff's alleged notices untimely, but none of them was submitted to the correct individual at the agency as set forth in the statute. The court ordered supplemental briefing from the parties to specifically address whether written notice was timely provided to the right person. Once that was completed, and with the Motion to Dismiss still pending, Catherine, Evan, and Perry opted to file a Motion for Judgment, further arguing that the plaintiff did not provide the mandatory notice of claim. In a 14-page decision, the court ultimately decided that the plaintiff failed to produce evidence to create a genuine dispute concerning whether she timely provided a mandatory notice of claim to the correct individual at the agency. Accordingly, the court granted the Motion to Dismiss and the Motion for Judgment.