

Circuit Court for Howard County
Case No. C-13-FM-24-000186

UNREPORTED
IN THE APPELLATE COURT
OF MARYLAND*

No. 1434

September Term, 2025

DANIEL OLATUNDE

v.

ADERONKE OLATUNDE

Berger,
Kehoe, S.
Hotten, Michele D.
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

Opinion by Kehoe, J.

Filed: April 13, 2026

*This is an unreported opinion. This opinion may not be cited as precedent within the rule of stare decisis. It may be cited for its persuasive value only if the citation conforms to Rule 1-104(a)(2)(B).

Aderonke Olatunde (“Wife”) filed, in the Circuit Court for Howard County, a complaint seeking an absolute divorce from Daniel Olatunde (“Husband”). Following a trial, the trial court entered a judgment granting the parties a divorce and deciding issues of custody, marital property, and attorneys’ fees. Husband thereafter noted this appeal, raising six questions for our review.¹ For clarity, we have rephrased those questions as:²

¹ Husband filed a reply brief on March 20, 2026. Wife moved to strike the reply brief because it exceeded the word count in Md. Rule 8-503(d) and raised issues that were not addressed in Husband’s original brief. For reasons that we will explain below we will grant the motion to strike.

² Husband phrased the questions as:

1. Whether the circuit court abused its discretion and violated due process by imposing and maintaining an overbroad discovery-sanctions regime that threatened to bar Appellant from participating in trial, cross-examining witnesses, or presenting evidence, and by allowing the merits trial to proceed under that regime.
2. Whether the circuit court abused its discretion by denying Appellant’s repeated requests for equal (50-50) physical custody without a reasoned best-interest analysis consistent with Maryland custody precedent, despite granting joint legal custody and making no finding of parental unfitness.
3. Whether the circuit court committed legal error by adjudicating ownership, classification, valuation, and disposition of property while denying intervention to the titled owner of disputed real estate, in violation of Maryland Rule 2-214 and due process.
4. Whether the circuit court abused its discretion by denying a monetary award and simultaneously ordering each party to keep property in his or her possession and/or titled name, without first performing the required Family Law § 8-203 classification and valuation steps and without findings under § 8-205.
5. Whether the circuit court abused its discretion by entering a \$25,000 attorneys’ fee judgment without required findings and without considering known joint IRS and Maryland Comptroller liabilities, as reflected in the Joint Statement of Property.

1. Did the trial court err or abuse its discretion in imposing discovery sanctions against Husband?
2. Did the trial court err or abuse its discretion in awarding Wife primary physical custody of the parties' minor children?
3. Did the trial court err or abuse its discretion in denying intervention by a third party?
4. Did the trial court err or abuse its discretion in declining to grant a monetary award and in ordering the parties to keep all personal property in their possession?
5. Did the trial court err or abuse its discretion in ordering Husband to pay attorneys' fees to Wife?
6. Does the cumulative effect of the court's alleged errors warrant reversal?

For reasons to follow, we hold that the trial court did not err or abuse its discretion in any of the rulings challenged by Husband. Accordingly, we affirm.

BACKGROUND

Husband and Wife were married in 2009. The parties had two children: the first child was born in 2010, and the second child was born in 2013 (collectively the “children”).

In January 2024, Wife filed for divorce. Husband filed a counter-complaint for divorce shortly thereafter. Around that time, the parties began living apart. The children lived primarily with Wife following the parties' separation.

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6. Whether the cumulative and structural effect of these interrelated errors requires vacatur, remand, and reassignment to a different judge to ensure the appearance and reality of fairness.

Discovery Sanctions

On March 5, 2024, Wife served Husband with Interrogatories and Requests for Production of Documents. On August 15, 2024, Wife filed a Motion to Compel and Request for Sanctions. In that motion, Wife alleged that, although Husband had responded to her discovery requests, those responses were deficient and failed to include pertinent documents regarding Husband’s finances. Husband opposed the motion, arguing that he had complied with Wife’s discovery requests.

On September 9, 2024, the court entered an order granting Wife’s motion. The court ordered Husband to “provide full responses to discovery requests within 14 days of the entry of this order.”

On October 25, 2024, Wife filed a second motion for sanctions. In that motion, Wife alleged that, since the court’s previous order, Husband had provided “very minimal information” and “no substantive response” to a discovery deficiency letter sent by Wife on October 1, 2024. Wife alleged that Husband was “purposefully withholding important income and asset information,” particularly as it related to several businesses owned by Husband. Wife noted that those businesses owned several undisclosed rental properties and that, on at least one occasion, Husband had sold one of those properties in an effort to hide assets from Wife. Wife further noted that Husband had failed to provide updated information regarding his current income and employment status.

On November 21, 2024, after Husband filed a response denying the allegations in Wife’s motion and claiming that all pertinent information had been disclosed, the court

entered an order granting Wife’s motion. In that order, the court found that Husband had “failed to provide full responses” and that his “discovery responses [were] patently deficient.” The court also found that Wife had made various good faith efforts at resolving the discovery dispute and that Husband “did not respond nor did he provide further information.” The court found that Husband’s “lack of response and absence of production [was] in bad faith.” The court then set forth a list of documents that Wife claimed were missing and ordered Husband to produce those documents within 14 days. The court added that, if Husband failed to produce those documents in the time provided, “then upon written request by [Wife], the Court shall grant an Order prohibiting [Husband] from participating in any hearing or trial for any reason whatsoever including, defending against any of [Wife’s] claims, cross-examining any witnesses, offering any evidence as it applies to the property adjudication in this case[.]”

On December 5, 2024, Husband filed a motion to alter or amend the court’s sanctions order, arguing, among other things, that he did not have the documents requested and that the documents he did have had already been disclosed. Wife subsequently filed a response refuting Husband’s claims.

On December 31, 2024, the court denied Husband’s motion. The court found that Husband’s motion “contains inappropriate content directed towards the Court and towards [Wife’s] counsel that is not consistent with this Court’s expectations of professional and civil conduct.” The court also found that Husband had failed to comply with the disclosure requirements set forth in the court’s November 2024 order. As such, the court ordered that

Husband was barred from offering any evidence at trial “regarding finances (to include but not be limited to alimony, property of any kind, and attorney’s fees).” The court made clear that Husband was not prohibited “from participating in the custody and access portion of the case.”

Motion to Intervene

In December 2024, a corporation, DMV Management Series – Z0 LLC (“DMV”), filed a motion to intervene. DMV, which was owned by Husband’s former business partner, alleged that it owned two properties that were “in contention” in the divorce proceedings and that were “subject to marital division by this court.” The properties, both of which were residential properties in Baltimore, purportedly had been transferred to DMV in 2020 when Husband and his business partner terminated their partnership. DMV argued that, because the divorce action would impair or impede its interests in the subject properties, it should be permitted to intervene as a matter of right.

After Wife filed a motion in opposition, the court denied DMV’s motion to intervene. The court did not provide an explanation for its decision.

Merits Trial

In January 2025, a six-day merits trial ensued. At that trial, both parties presented evidence and testimony relevant to custody. In addition, Wife presented ample evidence, including expert testimony, regarding the parties’ finances and Husband’s business dealings. As a result of the court’s discovery sanctions, Husband was not permitted to offer

evidence on the issue of marital property. Wife also presented evidence establishing that she had incurred \$104,980.00 in attorneys’ fees and costs over the course of the litigation.

Judgment of Absolute Divorce and Memorandum Opinion

On August 27, 2025, the trial court entered a judgment of absolute divorce and issued a 14-page memorandum detailing the evidence presented at the merits hearing and the court’s findings based on that evidence. In that judgment and memorandum, the court addressed and resolved issues related to custody, child support, alimony, marital property, and attorney’s fees.

Court’s Opinion - Custody

Regarding custody, the court included the following factual findings:

- Fitness of the parties: The court finds that both parents are fit to parent the children. Wife has been the more involved parent as detailed above. She is familiar with the children’s teachers, healthcare providers, and coaches. She attends their basketball practices and games. She arranges their tutoring and summer school, as well as their summer activities. Husband has not shown an interest in having greater involvement with the children unless he is granted 50/50 custody.
- Character and Reputation of the parties: The parties have a difficult and contentious relationship. Nothing is known of their reputations, but the Court has concerns that Husband attempted in his testimony to paint Wife in an unfavorable light through deceptive testimony. He introduced a picture of her smoking a hookah, suggesting that she is a drug user, when in rebuttal it was shown that Husband and Wife were at a hookah bar together, both smoking tobacco at the time. In addition, Husband was secretive and not forthcoming in discovery, making it impossible for the parties to engage in meaningful negotiation or for the Court to arrive at a fair and equitable division of property. This deceptive and secretive litigation strategy reflects poorly on Husband’s character.
- Desire of the parents and any prior agreements: The parties agreed that on a [pendente lite] basis that the children would live primarily with Wife at least

during the school year. Wife is seeking the same schedule going forward, with each party having 2 weeks vacation time with the minor children during the summer. Wife also asks that she be awarded sole legal custody. Husband seeks 50/50 shared physical custody on a week on/week off schedule and joint legal custody. Wife offered Husband dinner visits with the children on Wednesday evenings, but he declined if the visits were not overnight visits.

- Potentiality of maintaining natural family relations: There should be no trouble maintaining natural family relations. Neither parent has interfered with the other's parenting time pendente lite.
- Preferences of the children: No evidence of the children's preference was offered.
- Material opportunities affecting future life of the children: Wife runs a successful business that has provided support for herself and the children. At the time of the divorce hearing, it was difficult to determine Husband's ability to meet the children's financial needs in the future because he was living off of residual pay, he received for agreeing to a deferred resignation from his federal job. His re-employment prospects were unknown when the trial ended.
- Age, health and gender of the children: [Child 1] is a healthy fourteen-year-old boy. [Child 1] has been diagnosed with ADHD. [Child 2] is a healthy eleven-year-old boy. [Child 2] has migraines.
- Residences of the parents and opportunity for visitation: Wife is in the former marital home in Jessup, MD. Husband is in a home that was previously a rental located in Dundalk, MD. Husband testified that the parties reside twenty-five minutes apart. Wife testified that the drive takes longer.
- Length of separation from natural parents: The children have never been separated from either parent for an appreciable period of time. Wife testified that during the marriage, Husband often traveled without her and the children with the trips being about one week in length.
- Prior voluntary abandonment or surrender: None.
- Other: The Court is concerned that [Husband] has used extremely poor judgment at times with respect to the minor children. He sent one of the children a copy of a court document from the [domestic violence] case, along with a video of him declaring victory for men. He has brought the police to

the home in the presence of the children when there was no threat of violence or need for the police. Husband sent an email to [Child 1's] Spanish teacher seeking assistance with the divorce and mentioning involving [the Department of Social Services]. Husband has failed to take [Child 1] for medical care on his weekend and [Child 1] was returned to Wife with pneumonia. On another occasion, [Child 2] fell while in Husband's care sustaining a fracture on his shin, but Husband did not take him for a medical exam.

- Wife has also demonstrated poor judgment. On one occasion she took the children to McDonalds at 4:00 p.m. for their scheduled visit with Husband after Husband had notified her that he could not be there until 6:00 p.m. In addition, she posted a note on the front door indicating that [Husband] is not welcome there. The notice was there for a few months in late 2024.

* * *

- Capacity of parents to communicate: Wife testified that the parties are unable to communicate productively. She testified that Husband is aggressive and she does not feel comfortable with him. Husband testified that he feels that the parties will be able to make major decisions for the children and communicate more effectively after the litigation ends. A review of the parties' communications suggests that the parties are able to communicate civilly at times, but many of Husband's messages have been hostile, accusatory, and insulting. There was little evidence suggesting that the parties have disagreed about the children's education, religion, medical treatment, or extracurricular activities in the past, but it appears that Husband acquiesces to Wife's decisions on behalf of the children.
- Willingness to share custody: Husband expresses a willingness to share physical and legal custody with Wife. Wife wants primary physical and sole legal custody.
- Relationship between parent & child: Wife's witness testified as to the close loving relationship between the children and Wife. Husband's witness testified as to the close loving relationship between the children and Husband. The Court does not doubt that the children love both parents and that each party is an important person in their lives. Wife testified that even during the marriage Husband was uninvolved in the children's academics, activities, and healthcare, and that he remains uninvolved. Wife is the one who has enrolled the children in extracurricular activities and summer classes. Wife has been primarily responsible for taking the children to

medical appointments. Wife takes an active role in the children's daily care and is primarily responsible for making major decisions for the children. Wife has kept Husband abreast of the children's activities, schedules, medical appointments, etc., but Husband has not taken the initiative to become involved.

- Potential disruption of the child's life: The children have busy schedules, both during the school year and during the summer. Both children have historically attended summer classes and play basketball. The children's extracurricular activities are important to them. Wife testified that Husband has been at times unwilling to take the children to their activities on his time, and they have had to miss practices and STEM activities. In addition, Wife has concerns that the distance between Husband's home and the children's school make school-week visits suboptimal.
- Geographic proximity of parental homes: The parties live in close enough proximity to permit frequent contact between each parent and the children.
- Demands of parental employment: Inconsistent evidence was offered regarding the demands of either party's employment. Historically, Wife's employment has not interfered with her ability to meet the children's needs. Husband was last working in the DC area, making for a long commute on workdays. It is unknown where he will be working next.
- Financial status of the parents: Wife's financial status seems relatively stable. She is able to meet her own needs and contribute to the needs of the children. Husband's financial status is not fully known due to his failure to make full discovery.
- Impact on state or federal assistance: No evidence was offered suggesting that either parent is receiving state or federal assistance. Wife has the children enrolled in insurance through the Maryland Healthcare Exchange, but nothing in this case will affect that.
- Benefit to parents: The primary benefit to both parents is the opportunity to bond with and teach the children. If Husband was awarded shared physical custody, his child support obligation might be lower.

From that, the court found that it was “in the children’s best interests to remain in the primary physical custody of Wife.” The court granted Husband access to the children on alternating weekends. The court ordered that the parties would share legal custody.

Court’s Opinion – Marital Property

Regarding the parties’ marital property, the court noted that “the entire process has been frustrated by Husband’s failure to comply with the rules and this Court’s orders concerning discovery.” The court found that, although Wife was “able to bring some of the information on property in Husband’s name or under his control before the court by hiring a licensed real estate appraiser and issuing subpoenas to banks,” she “did not have access to information about the various companies Husband owns and operates or the location of monies withdrawn from marital accounts.” The court remarked that the “problem created by Husband’s lack of transparency and disclosure is that much of the information sought is within Husband’s exclusive control and not otherwise obtainable by Wife.” The court concluded that it was “left in a quandary when it comes to distribution of marital property.”

Despite those evidentiary shortcomings, the court made the following findings:

Listed below is the information the Court was able to glean from the evidence presented in Court and admissions on the 9-207 Joint Statement Concerning Marital and Non-Marital Property. The Court notes that on August 11, 2025, shortly before the last day of the hearing, Husband filed an “Amended Joint Statement Concerning Marital and Non-Marital Property” which was not signed by Wife. This document is considered only to the extent that it reveals that Husband received \$23,597.25 in surplus funds from the foreclosure on the Belle Vista property, funds that he claims are non-marital. Significantly, Husband did not reveal the location of these alleged funds or the date that they were received by him.

The Court finds that the parties own the following marital property:

- 8446 Jacqueline Court, Jessup Md. Titled to Wife. Fair market value is \$700,000.00 Mortgage balance is \$316,380.74. Net value \$383,691.26.
- 8214 Seaworthy Way, Dundalk Md. Titled to Husband. Fair market value is \$362,500.00. Mortgage amount was \$183,000.00 but Husband indicated he stopped paying the mortgage so the amount of the current arrearage, if any, is unknown. Based on documents received by Wife pursuant to a subpoena to the lender, the balance as of December 11, 2024, was \$194,020.11. The net value of the house is \$168,479.89.
- Wife has household goods that she valued at \$8,000.00. Husband furnished the house on Seaworthy, but did not declare a value or provide discovery to establish the value.
- Bank of America #5520. Joint. \$0.47
- Bank of America #3224. Titled to Wife, \$1,736.48
- Wells Fargo #0694. Titled to Wife. \$29.05
- Paypal titled to Wife. \$71.32
- Stripe Account titled to Wife. \$208.12
- Capital One 360 #0528 titled to Wife. \$78.82
- TSP titled to Husband \$3,291.642
- FERS account belonging to Husband \$2,845.15
- Music Boulevard business belonging to Wife: no value given
- Plenty Wealth Group business belonging to Husband: No value given
- 2021 Toyota Camry titled to Husband \$0

- 2016 Tesla titled to Wife: value \$13,187. Loan from relative to purchase the vehicle, \$10,000. Net value \$3,187

In addition to the above, there were rental properties titled in the name of Mainframe Ventures and Quality Services, both companies owned by Husband. Wife hired a residential appraiser, Carolyn Moberly, to value the properties. Ms. Moberly located three properties titled to Mainframe to which she attributed a combined value of \$629,500.00. There was a fourth property titled to Mainframe which had been transferred to a long-time friend of Husband for \$60,300.00. One of the properties located at 5506 Belle Vista Avenue in Baltimore, MD, had gone into foreclosure. This is the property that Husband claimed the \$23,597.25 on his August 11, 2025 “Joint Statement” as his sole and separate property. This has significance since that property was titled in the name of Mainframe Ventures, not Husband’s individual name. This raises a question as to the true owner of the other properties. However, since Husband did not make disclosures in discovery, the Court is unable to determine whether the properties are marital or non-marital and the net value.

From that, the court found that the marital property in Wife’s name totaled \$397,002.05, while the marital property in Husband’s name totaled \$198,213.93. The court also found that Husband, by way of his business entities, had additional properties with a combined value of over \$629,500.00. Based on those findings, the court concluded that a monetary award to either party was unwarranted. The court also found “it equitable that each party keep the property in his or her own name and the personal property in his or her own possession.”

Court’s Opinion – Attorneys’ Fees

Finally, the court noted that both parties had requested attorneys’ fees. The court noted that each party had blamed the other “for making litigation more contentious” and that “on two prior occasions the court [had] awarded counsel fees due to Husband’s failure to make discovery.” The court stated that it had “considered the financial needs and assets

of the parties, to the extent that they were disclosed” and that it did “not believe that either party was wholly unjustified in taking positions that have been taken in the litigation on the ultimate issues before the court, other than marital property as described above.” Based on those considerations, the court ordered Husband to contribute \$25,000.00 to Wife’s attorneys’ fees.

This timely appeal followed. Additional facts will be supplied as needed below.

DISCUSSION

As an initial matter, we will address Wife’s Motion to Strike Husband’s reply brief. Wife points out that the reply brief exceeds the word limitation set forth in Md. Rule 8-503(d)(3) and raises issues not raised in the original brief. Husband certified that the reply brief did not exceed 9,000 words. However, the word limitation for a reply brief is 3,500. As noted, Husband’s original brief raised six issues. His reply brief raises nine issues.³

³ In his reply brief, Husband raises the following issues (without subparts):

I. Appellee’s attempt to recast the sanctions issue fails because the sanctions prevented appellant from presenting evidence on the very issues the trial court then decided.

II. The sanctions cannot be reconciled with Judge Porter’s September 9, 2024 order directing that sanctions be considered at the merits hearing.

III. The financial rulings cannot stand because the trial court expressly acknowledged that the evidentiary record was incomplete and nevertheless ruled.

IV. The court did not complete the mandatory three-step marital property analysis required by Family Law Title 8.

V. Appellee’s defense of the custody ruling fails because key findings rest on unsupported assumptions rather than a complete record

Issues I, II, III and IV of Husband’s reply brief are a reframing of issues raised in his original brief. The remaining issues, however, are new to the reply brief. We ordinarily do not consider issues raised for the first time in a reply brief. *Jones v. State*, 379 Md. 704, 713 (2004). We usually decline to consider issues raised for the first time in a reply brief because an appellee cannot address them in their brief. Husband’s reply brief exceeded the word count permitted by Rule 8-503(d)(3), and it raises issues not found in his main brief. Accordingly, we grant the motion to strike Husband’s reply brief.

I.

Parties’ Contentions

Husband first claims that the trial court “imposed and maintained an overbroad sanctions regime” that not only limited the evidence but “dictated the outcome.” Husband argues that sanctions that act as a default judgment on contested issues “violate due process and exceed permissible discretion.” Husband also argues that “sanctions that restrict custody-related evidence are particularly suspect.”

Wife contends that the court exercised reasonable discretion in sanctioning Husband for his discovery violations. Wife argues that the court’s discovery sanctions were

VI. The record demonstrates that appellant repeatedly sought communication with and access to the children, undermining the narrative that he was disengaged

VII. The opinion’s reference to appellant’s statement that he would appeal if denied equal custody was an improper consideration in the custody analysis.

VIII. The attorney’s fee award cannot stand because the financial record was incomplete and the court’s own findings undercut a punitive award

IX. Unified structural error and remedy.

proportional to the violation and were properly restricted to the issues that were related to the particular information that Husband had failed to disclose.

Standard of Review

We review a court’s decision to impose discovery sanctions for abuse of discretion. *Matter of City of Hagerstown*, 265 Md. App. 581, 629 (2025), *cert. denied sub nom.*, *City of Hagerstown v. Johnson*, 492 Md. 402 (2025). “Under this standard, an appellate court will not ‘second-guess the [trial] court’s ruling’ unless the trial court ‘exercised its discretion in a manner that was manifestly unreasonable, or [] on untenable grounds, or for untenable reasons.’” *Id.* (quoting *Dackman v. Robinson*, 464 Md. 189, 235 (2019)).

Analysis

Under Maryland’s discovery rules, if a court finds a failure of discovery, it “may enter such orders in regard to the failure as are just, including ... [a]n order refusing to allow the failing party to support or oppose designated claims or defenses, or prohibiting that party from introducing designated matters in evidence[.]” Md. Rule 2-433(a)(2). A court may impose similar sanctions if, “upon motion of a party and reasonable notice to other parties and all persons affected,” the court finds that a person has failed to obey an order compelling discovery. Md. Rule 2-433(c).

“When determining whether to impose a discovery sanction, the trial court should consider: ‘(1) the reasons why the disclosure was not made; (2) the existence and amount of any prejudice to the opposing party; (3) the feasibility of curing any prejudice; and (4) any other relevant circumstances.’” *City of Hagerstown*, 265 Md. App. at 629 (quoting

Dackman, 464 Md. at 231–32). “[I]n fashioning a sanction, the court should impose the least severe sanction that is consistent with the purpose of the discovery rules[.]” *Id.* (quoting *Watson v. Timberlake*, 251 Md. App. 420, 437 (2021)). Generally, the “exclusion of evidence for a discovery violation is not a favored sanction and is one of the most drastic measures that can be imposed.” *Thomas v. State*, 397 Md. 557, 572 (2007). Such a sanction is “normally reserved for persistent and deliberate violations that actually cause some prejudice, either to a party or to the court.” *Kadish v. Kadish*, 254 Md. App. 467, 495 (2022) (quoting *Butler v. S&S P’ship*, 435 Md. 635, 650 (2013)).

Against that backdrop, we hold that the trial court did not abuse its discretion in precluding Husband from presenting evidence on financial matters as a discovery sanction. To begin with, Husband is wrong in claiming that such sanctions violate due process and exceed permissible discretion. The discovery rules make clear that the sanction imposed here was well within the court’s discretion, and the rules provide adequate due process protections, including notice and the opportunity to cure any deficiencies, both of which were afforded to Husband.

On the merits, the record shows that Husband persistently failed to produce discoverable financial documents and information despite repeated requests from Wife and repeated orders from the court directing Husband to turn over said documents and information. As the court remarked in its various orders, not only were Husband’s discovery responses “patently deficient,” but his “lack of response and absence of production [was] in bad faith,” and at least one of his filings contained “inappropriate

content directed towards the Court and towards [Wife’s] counsel that [was] not consistent with [the court’s] expectations of professional and civil conduct.” Furthermore, Husband’s actions were clearly prejudicial, as evidenced by the court’s remarks in its memorandum opinion, in which the court noted that “the entire process has been frustrated by Husband’s failure to comply with the rules and this Court’s orders concerning discovery” and that, as a result, the court was “left in a quandary when it comes to distribution of marital property.” Given those circumstances, the court did not abuse its discretion in sanctioning Husband for his discovery violations.

To be sure, we have noted that, in child custody cases, a court’s discretion to exclude evidence as a discovery violation is “not only measured by the potential prejudice to the parties, but is constrained by a court’s ‘absolute and overriding obligation to conduct a thorough examination of all possible factors that impact the best interests of the child.’” *Kadish*, 254 Md. App. at 495 (quoting *A.A. v. Ab.D.*, 246 Md. App. 418, 444 (2020)). Here, however, those constraints were not implicated because the court’s exclusion of evidence was limited to financial matters. The record shows that the court’s discovery sanctions had no impact on Husband’s ability to present evidence related to custody, nor did it have any impact on the court’s examination of the children’s best interests. To the contrary, the record makes plain that the court conducted a comprehensive and meaningful examination of all relevant factors that impacted the children’s best interests.

II.

Parties' Contentions

Husband next claims that the court denied granting him shared physical custody of the children “without the required best-interest analysis” and “without articulating why shared physical custody was rejected.” Husband argues that, because custody determinations demand a thorough review of a child’s best interest, “the court’s failure to provide a reasoned explanation” constituted an abuse of discretion.

Wife contends that Husband’s arguments are without merit. Wife argues that the court’s custody determination was supported by competent evidence and reflected a reasoned analysis of the children’s best interests.

Standard of Review

Appellate review of a trial court’s decision regarding child custody involves three interrelated standards. *Arizona v. Suleymanov*, 243 Md. App. 340, 372 (2019). First, any factual findings are reviewed for clear error. *Id.* Second, any legal conclusions are reviewed *de novo*. *Id.* Finally, if the court’s ultimate conclusion is “founded upon sound legal principles and based upon factual findings that are not clearly erroneous, the [court’s] decision should be disturbed only if there has been a clear abuse of discretion.” *Id.* (quoting *In re Yve S.*, 373 Md. 551, 586 (2003)). Under the abuse of discretion standard, “we will not reverse a trial court unless its decision is ‘well removed from any center mark imagined by the reviewing court.’” *Santo v. Santo*, 448 Md. 620, 626 (2016) (quoting *In re Adoption/Guardianship of Alonza D., Jr.*, 347 Md. 295, 313 (1997)).

Analysis

This Court has identified various factors a trial court should consider when making a custody determination. *J.A.B. v. J.E.D.B.*, 250 Md. App. 234, 253 (2021). Those factors include but are not limited to: the parties’ fitness; the parties’ character and reputation; the parties’ desire; any agreements between the parties; the potential of maintaining natural family relations; the child’s preference; any material opportunities affecting the child’s future; the child’s age, health, and sex; the parties’ residence and the opportunity for visitation; the length of separation from the natural parents; and any prior voluntary abandonment or surrender. *Id.*

When considering those factors, “the trial court should examine ‘the totality of the situation in the alternative environments and avoid focusing on or weighing any single factor to the exclusion of all others.’” *Jose v. Jose*, 237 Md. App. 588, 600 (2018) (quoting *Best v. Best*, 93 Md. App. 644, 656 (1992)). “The primary goal of access determinations in Maryland is to serve the best interests of the child.” *Conover v. Conover*, 450 Md. 51, 60 (2016). “Indeed, ‘[t]he best interest of the child is [] not considered as one of many factors, but as the objective to which virtually all other factors speak.’” *E.N. v. T.R.*, 474 Md. 346, 397 (2021) (quoting *Taylor v. Taylor*, 306 Md. 290, 303 (1986)). “In this regard, trial courts are endowed with great discretion in making decisions concerning the best interest of the child.” *Bussell v. Bussell*, 194 Md. App. 137, 157–58 (2010) (quoting *Petrini v. Petrini*, 336 Md. 453, 469–70 (1994)).

We hold that the court did not err or abuse its discretion in deciding custody. The record makes plain that the court conducted an exhaustive analysis of the relevant factors, properly weighed those factors in light of the totality of the circumstances, and reached a reasoned decision based on the children’s best interests. In so doing, the court clearly articulated its reasons for awarding primary physical custody of the children to Wife, and the court set forth a substantial evidentiary foundation to justify that decision. In short, Husband’s claims that the court failed to engage in the appropriate analysis and failed to provide a reasonable explanation for its decision are unequivocally belied by the record.

III.

Parties’ Contentions

Husband next claims that the court erred in denying DMV’s motion to intervene. Husband contends that two of the “disputed properties” were owned by DMV. Husband argues that “adjudicating ownership, classification, and disposition of property while denying the titled owner the right to intervene and be heard violates due process and constitutes legal error.”

Wife argues that Husband does not have standing to challenge the ruling because he was not aggrieved by the decision. Wife further argues that, regardless, the court’s decision to deny intervention was legally correct and not an abuse of discretion.

Analysis

We first note that the motion to intervene was filed by DMV. The affidavit in support of the motion to intervene was signed by Andrew Osazuwa, the owner of DMV.

DMV filed its motion intervene pursuant to Md. Rule 12-102, which provides the procedure for *lis pendens*, apparently to assert its interest in real property. DMV’s motion was denied, and it has not appealed that order. For reasons that we explain below, we need not reach the issue of standing to address the circuit court’s denial of the motion to intervene. Similarly, we need not address the substance of the motion to intervene.

We need not delve into the merits of either parties’ arguments because, assuming without deciding that DMV had some right to intervene and that Husband has a right to challenge the court’s intervention ruling, Husband has failed to establish any prejudice to either him or DMV.⁴ “To warrant reversal in a civil case, an appellant must show both error and prejudice.” *In re J.J.*, 231 Md. App. 304, 337 (2016). “Prejudice means an ‘error that influenced the outcome of the case.’” *Sumpter v. Sumpter*, 436 Md. 74, 82 (2013) (quoting *Harris v. David S. Harris, P.A.*, 310 Md. 310, 319 (1987)). The focus of the inquiry is whether the appellant suffered “substantial injury” as a result of the error. *Flanagan v. Flanagan*, 181 Md. App. 492, 516 (2008).

Here, DMV moved to intervene on the grounds that it owned two residential properties that were, according to DMV, at issue in the divorce proceedings. The record shows, however, that neither property was considered by the court in its identification and valuation of the parties’ marital property or in its decision regarding whether to grant a

⁴ To be sure, we are not suggesting that the trial court erred or abused its discretion in denying DMV’s motion to intervene. We have simply chosen to omit any discussion of the matter, as such a discussion is unnecessary given that the court’s decision had no discernible effect on the outcome of the case.

marital award. Furthermore, there is nothing in the record to indicate that the court made any decision or ruling that could reasonably be construed as implicating DMV’s interests in the subject properties. Thus, the court’s decision to deny DMV’s intervention motion had no impact on the outcome of the case and resulted in no injury to either Husband or DMV.

IV.

Parties’ Contentions

Husband next contends that the court erred in its treatment and disposition of the parties’ property. He argues that the court, in denying a monetary award and ordering each party to keep certain property, failed to follow the required steps or make the requisite findings. Husband also argues that the court’s “failure to adjudicate or provide a mechanism for recovery of [his] personal property constitutes a deprivation of property without due process.”

Wife argues that the court did not err or abuse its discretion in deciding issues related to the parties’ marital property. She contends that the court engaged in the requisite analysis and reasonably determined that a marital award was unwarranted. Wife also contends that the court properly disposed of the parties’ personal property.

Standard of Review

We review a court’s identification and valuation of marital property under a clearly erroneous standard. *Richards v. Richards*, 166 Md. App. 263, 271–72 (2005). A court’s decision regarding a monetary award is reviewed for abuse of discretion. *Id.* at 272.

Analysis

The identification and distribution of marital property in Maryland is a three-step process. *Hart v. Hart*, 169 Md. App. 151, 158–59 (2006). First, “if there is a dispute as to whether certain property is marital property, the court shall determine which property is marital property.” Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 8-203(a). Once the court has identified which property is marital, “the court shall determine the value of all marital property.” Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 8-204(a). Finally, after identifying and valuing the marital property, “the court may transfer ownership of an interest in property described in paragraph (2) of this subsection, grant a monetary award, or both, as an adjustment of the equities and rights of the parties concerning marital property[.]” Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 8-205(a)(1). The property that a court may transfer ownership of an interest in is limited to certain retirement accounts, family use personal property, and the family home. Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 8-205(a)(2).

We hold that the court did not err or abuse its discretion. Despite Husband’s unsupported claims to the contrary, the record makes plain that the court engaged in the requisite analysis in identifying and valuing the parties’ marital property and in determining whether to grant a monetary award. The court’s decision not to grant a monetary award and to have each party retain his or her personal property was supported by the evidence and was reasonable under the circumstances. The court was not required to provide a mechanism for recovery of Husband’s personal property.

V.

Parties’ Contentions

Husband next claims that the court erred in ordering him to pay \$25,000.00 in attorneys’ fees to Wife. He argues that the court failed to “explain why \$25,000 was selected, how reasonableness was assessed, or how ability to pay was evaluated.” He also contends that the award was not supported by Wife’s billing affidavit, which reflected “a much larger claimed amount,” and that the court failed to take into account the parties’ “substantial joint tax liabilities.”

Wife argues that the court properly considered the requisite factors and made a reasonable award. Wife contends that the court was not required to make specific findings regarding the parties’ tax liabilities.

Standard of Review

“[T]he standard of review for the award of counsel fees and costs in a domestic case is that of whether the trial judge abused his discretion in making or denying the award.” *Leineweber v. Leineweber*, 220 Md. App. 50, 65 (2014) (quoting *Steinhoff v. Steinhoff*, 144 Md. App. 463, 487 (2002)). “Stated differently, ‘[a]n award of attorney’s fees will not be reversed unless a court’s discretion was exercised arbitrarily or the judgment was clearly wrong.’” *Id.* (quoting *Petrini v. Petrini*, 336 Md. 453, 468 (1994)).

Analysis

Section 12-103 of the Family Law Article of the Maryland Code states that, in a proceeding involving the custody of a child, a court “may award to either party the costs

and counsel fees that are just and proper under all the circumstances[.]” Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 12-103(a). Before such an award can be made, however, the court must consider: “(1) the financial status of each party; (2) the needs of each party; and (3) whether there was substantial justification for bringing, maintaining, or defending the proceeding.” Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law § 12-103(b). That said, “the court need not ‘specifically recite the statutory factors in its award of attorney[s]’ fees’ provided the evidence in the record indicates that the court engaged in the requisite analysis.” *Sayed A. v. Susan A.*, 265 Md. App. 40, 90 (2025) (quoting *Meyr v. Meyr*, 195 Md. App. 524, 553 (2010)). In addition, “[w]hen a court exercises its discretion by balancing and weighing the rights, interests, and reasons of the parties, the court is not required to discuss each factor considered, ... and is not required to set out in detail each and every step of his [or her] thought process.” *Kadish*, 254 Md. App. at 495 (citations and quotations omitted).

We hold that the court did not abuse its discretion in awarding attorneys’ fees to Wife. The record shows that the court considered each of the requisite statutory factors before making the award. In addition, although the court found that Husband was not “wholly unjustified” in taking certain positions during the litigation, the court also found that Husband’s actions during discovery had exacerbated the parties’ problems and made the resolution of the parties’ marital property dispute more difficult. Given those circumstances, and given that Wife presented competent evidence establishing that she incurred over \$100,000.00 in attorneys’ fees and costs over the course of the litigation, the court acted reasonably in ordering Husband to pay \$25,000.00 in attorneys’ fees to Wife.

The court was not required to make any additional express findings, including any findings regarding the parties’ joint tax liability, before making that award.

VI.

Husband’s final contention is that the “cumulative effect” of the court’s various errors warrants reversal. We disagree. As explained in greater detail above, we perceive no error in any of the court’s rulings, let alone multiple errors that would indicate any prejudice to Husband. *See Muhammad v. State*, 177 Md. App. 188, 325 (2007) (“In a case involving two or more errors, the thing that may cumulate is the prejudicial effect of two or more actual findings of error, not the effect of two or more mere allegations of error.”). As such, the “cumulative effect” doctrine is inapplicable here. *See id.* at 326. (“There is ... no such thing as a cumulative prejudicial impact of non-error.”).

MOTION TO STRIKE REPLY BRIEF IS GRANTED. JUDGMENT OF THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR HOWARD COUNTY AFFIRMED. COSTS TO BE PAID BY APPELLANT.