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TURN YOUR OUT-OF-STATE JUDGMENT INTO MONEY

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Like many states, Michigan has adopted the [Uniform Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act \(“UEFJA”\)](#). With this law, turning an out-of-state judgment into a Michigan judgment is as simple as filing the following with the clerk of the court in Michigan: (1) A certified copy of the judgment from your state; (2) An affidavit that the judgment has not been satisfied; and (3) the filing fee. This is often called *domesticating a foreign judgment*.

Once the proper documents are filed with the court clerk, the clerk sends a copy of the judgment and the affidavit to the debtor. The debtor then has 21 days to object. If the debtor does not object, the judgment is as collectible as any other Michigan judgment. Our attorneys typically use garnishments and requests / orders to seize property in order to try and collect on the judgment.

There are a few situations where domestication of a foreign judgment may not be permitted if the debtor raises certain defenses. First, the debtor could argue that the out-of-state court did not have proper jurisdiction to hear the case and enter a judgment. Most states have “long-arm” jurisdiction statutes that are fairly broad and allow an out-of-state court to “reach into” Michigan and obtain jurisdiction over a Michigan resident if they failed to pay a debt in another state. The second defense that we often see is the debtor alleges that they were not properly served with the summons and complaint from the out-of-state court. If service of process was not proper, the judgment may be set aside. It doesn’t mean the debt is not owed – it simply means that you have to start over with a new lawsuit in the proper jurisdiction in order to get proper service and enter a valid and binding judgment.

Our firm is frequently asked to help out-of-state law firms and out-of-state companies collect debts in Michigan. If you have a judgment from outside the State of Michigan, and the debtor resides in Michigan, we can help.