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Support Bill HB 387 – Commissioned Public Art: Artist Rights and Registration of Art

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The Honorable Members of the House Appropriations Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD

Dear Chair Barnes; Vice Chair Kaiser and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of House Bill 387 (HB 387), which protects the rights of artists commissioned for State public art installations and establishes a registration process with the Maryland State Arts Council.

HB 387 ensures that contracts for State public art may not require artists to waive their copyright protections or rights under the Visual Artist Rights Act (VARA), unless the artist voluntarily chooses to do so in writing. This is a critical safeguard for preserving artistic integrity and protecting the reputation and legacy of artists whose work is publicly funded. **Protecting the rights of public artists is paramount, as it is in any creative profession.**

Public art is a lasting investment in Maryland's communities by enhancing neighborhoods, boosting the economy, and supporting residents' well-being. It shapes identity, builds pride, and creates a lasting cultural legacy. When public artworks are altered or damaged without the artist's consent, the integrity of that investment is compromised, harming both artists and the public.

HB 387 also establishes a clear and practical system for registering State public art with the Maryland State Arts Council, including basic information such as the artist's name, the location, the type of art, the title, and the date of installation or creation. This ensures accountability, transparency, and long-term stewardship of Maryland's public art assets.

This legislation affirms that Maryland respects artists' rights and recognizes the public's interest in preserving the integrity and legacy of publicly funded art. It is appropriately limited in scope to projects involving State funds, and it balances protection with flexibility by allowing voluntary, written waivers when truly necessary.

As a chief advocate of the legislation creating the state's Commission on Public Art and a former director and commissioner, I bring nearly 25 years' experience in public art administration across Prince George's County, Maryland, and D.C., as well as advisory roles throughout Maryland. I value the integrity and community impact of public art, and believe its sustained significance is vital. For effective care of the state's investment, conservation, collaborating with the artist helps preserve the work's integrity and ensures proper materials and care are used.

Establishing a framework that safeguards artists and supports administrators and others responsible for the installation and conservation of public art is vital. HB 387 achieves this objective and clearly demonstrates that Maryland values both its artists and the public spaces enriched by their work.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 387.

Sincerely,



Lauren Dugas Glover