



Chairman Ben Barnes
Vice Chair Anne Kaiser
Honorable Member of the House Appropriations Committee
2/3/2026

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 387

On behalf of Maryland Citizens for the Arts, I urge you to support HB387, an important measure that upholds the rights of artists and ensures the preservation of public art commissioned by entities receiving state funding.

HB387 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.

Public art is a lasting investment in Maryland’s communities. It enhances the vibrancy of our neighborhoods, contributes to economic growth, and supports the health and well-being of residents. It creates identity, fosters pride, and leaves a cultural legacy for future generations. 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.

HB387 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.

I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of this legislation and thank you for your leadership in protecting Maryland’s vibrant arts community.

Sincerely,

Nicholas S Cohen,
Executive Director, MCA

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