



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 687 / Senate Bill 475 – Protecting the Admissibility of Creative Expression (PACE Act). This bill establishes necessary safeguards against the misuse of creative works: such as rap lyrics, poetry, and other artistic expressions, in criminal and juvenile proceedings. It ensures that artistic expression cannot be unfairly weaponized against individuals in court unless stringent legal thresholds are met. By protecting creative works from being distorted or taken out of context, **HB 687 / Senate Bill 475** affirms the importance of artistic freedom while ensuring that prosecutions are based on concrete evidence rather than racial bias and cultural misinterpretations.

For Black Marylanders, this legislation is particularly crucial. Maryland, and Baltimore in particular, has a long-standing reputation for producing groundbreaking Black artists, poets, and musicians whose work has shaped national and global culture. However, in a legal system which disproportionately police and prosecute Black individuals, artistic expression, especially in rap music, has been wrongfully used as a means of criminalizing Black voices. **HB 687 / Senate Bill 475** ensures that Black creators can continue to engage in artistic expression without fear that their words will be misrepresented in a courtroom. Moreover, it protects young Black Marylanders by encouraging their participation in music, poetry, and the arts as positive outlets for creativity, economic opportunity, and personal expression, rather than allowing their words to be misconstrued as criminal intent.

HB 687 / Senate Bill 475 also serves as a step toward addressing racial disparities in the criminal justice system by reducing the likelihood of racial profiling and cultural bias in legal proceedings. By affirming that art is not a crime, this bill safeguards Black artistic contributions and upholds principles of fairness and due process.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports **HB 687 / Senate Bill 475**.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland