

February 14, 2025



Maryland State House of Delegates  
House Appropriations Committee  
Delegate Elizabeth Embry  
Lowe House Office Building, Room 316  
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

## **Honorable Members of the House Appropriations Committee**

### **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 0961**

#### **Commissioned Public Art - Artist Rights**

Dear Members,

I strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB 0961. This legislation will protect artist rights and, in the interests of the citizens of Maryland, preserve the integrity of public art commissioned by entities receiving state funding.

My name is Graham Coreil-Allen and I am a public artist and placemaker living and working in West Baltimore. I am a member of the Greater Mondawmin community and have spent sixteen years in Baltimore; where I have started and grown my community-based public art and placemaking business, Graham Projects. My design-build firm collaborates with neighbors to interpret and activate public space through placemaking projects for pedestrian safety and play. We employ four regular employees and over half a dozen seasonal artist assistants. In the past I have worked as an independent civic organizer behind the arts voting initiative Citizen Artist Baltimore, which mobilized artists to vote in the 2016 Baltimore City Mayoral race. More recently I served as Co-Chair of Mayor Brandon Scott's 2020 Arts and Culture Transition Committee.

In the national public art sector it is widely understood and valued that artists should maintain their copyright and federal VARA (Visual Artist Rights Act of 1990) protections. Sadly, these ethical norms are not always followed by municipalities and commissioning agencies in the state of Maryland. All too often working artists in need of work are forced to waive their right to artwork integrity, attribution, and intellectual property; lest they lose the commission.

Due to the lack of copyright and VARA protections, public artworks in Maryland have been modified, destroyed, lost, and reproduced without credit or compensation to the artist. Such maneuvers and neglect by commissioning agencies are exploitative of artists and must be stopped! Furthermore, loss of public art harms the cultural assets that all Marylanders are entitled to enjoy and is a mismanagement of state collected tax revenue.

Passage of HB 0961 would ensure that entities issuing public art commissions supported with state funding would be prohibited from the exploitative practices of taking artists VARA and copyright protection.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Coreil-Allen', written in a cursive style.

Graham Coreil-Allen, MFA  
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Legislative District 40