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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB1006: Public Artists

Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
Wednesday, March 12, 2025 3:00 PM

Arts uplifts and enriches our communities. It reflects our diversity and communicates our values. In addition to funding, Maryland can do better to support our working artists. [SB1006/HB961](#) is a modest bill that would provide a much-needed measure of protection.

Too often, working artists are required to waive their rights under the federal Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA) of 1990 as a condition for receiving a grant for publicly commissioned art. These protect an artist's integrity, attribution, and intellectual property. Requiring a waiver deters some artists from having their work displayed. Additionally, publicly commissioned works have been damaged or have even [disappeared entirely](#), underscoring the need for stronger protections.

[SB1006](#) seeks to protect visual artists by ensuring that their VARA rights cannot be made a condition of accepting a State-funded grant. This bill not only protects artists, but safeguards taxpayer dollars.

As amended and passed by the House of Delegates (124-9), waivers would be allowed in limited cases, primarily relating to

- Registration with the Maryland State Arts Council;
- Attribution: ensuring that an artist's work cannot be falsely attributed to another individual; and
- Preservation: addressing situations in which the artwork is structurally integrated into a building and cannot be feasibly maintained.

SB1006 is not intended to stop negotiations. Rather, it ensures that artists who do not wish to waive their rights are not forced to do so in order to receive funding.

This bill would maintain artistic integrity and ensure that our State gives grants to talented artists-- not barred by contract negotiations.

I urge a favorable report on SB1006 as amended.