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

Re: Support for House Bill 387 – Commissioned Public Art: Artist Rights and  
Registration of Art

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing in **strong support of House Bill 387**, which protects the rights of artists commissioned for State public art 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.

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.

As an arts administrator, minister, and resident of Baltimore City, this bill matters to me

because artists are consistently undervalued, when, in reality, it is artists and their work that make a place memorable. Public art makes public places safer; they give an area character; and they can serve as a visual record of a community's values.

I have seen firsthand how public art strengthens communities and how vulnerable artworks can become when protections are weakened. HB387 sends a clear message that Maryland values both artists and the public spaces their work enriches.

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

Sincerely,  
Barbara Hauck