

Martha Jackson Jarvis

Public Artist

Jackson Jarvis Studio, LLC Jackson Jarvis Studio@gmail.com

January 17, 2026

**Re: Support for SB41 – Artist’s Rights Protection
Assigned to the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee**

Dear Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing in strong support of **SB41 – Artist’s Rights Protection**, sponsored by Delegate Elizabeth Embry and Senator Cheryl Kagan. As a public artist who has spent decades creating permanent works in civic, institutional, and community spaces across Maryland and beyond, I understand firsthand the importance of protecting artistic integrity and the public’s investment in public art.

Public art is not decorative—it is civic infrastructure. It carries history, identity, and shared values into public space. When artists are required to waive their federal protections under the **Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA)** and copyright law as a condition of commissioning, the long-term integrity of these works is placed at risk. Such waivers leave public art vulnerable to alteration, removal, or destruction without the artist’s consent, compromising both the artist’s reputation and the public trust.

I have witnessed public artworks altered or damaged in ways that fundamentally change their meaning—often without consultation with the artist or regard for the communities the work was created to serve. These actions diminish the cultural, historical, and financial value of public art and undermine the very purpose for which public funds are invested.

SB41 addresses this issue with care and clarity. It affirms that the State of Maryland respects artists’ rights while also safeguarding the public interest in preserving the legacy of publicly funded art. Importantly, the bill is limited in scope, applying only to contracts involving state funds, and it includes a thoughtful review mechanism through the Office of the Attorney General with guidance from the Maryland State Arts Council when unforeseen circumstances arise.

Protecting artists’ rights protects the public. When public art is preserved as intended, it continues to enhance the vibrancy of our cities and neighborhoods, contributes to economic development, supports community well-being, and creates lasting landmarks that define place and memory. Maryland has invested wisely in public art through federal, state, and local programs—SB41 ensures that those investments endures..This legislation matters deeply to me not only as an artist, but as a citizen who believes that public spaces should reflect care, accountability, and respect for cultural labor. I urge the Committee to support SB41 and advance it forward.

Thank you for your consideration, Respectfully, Martha Jackson Jarvis