



## MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair  
Delegate Debra Davis, Vice Chair  
Judiciary Committee Members  
FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus  
DATE: 2/17/2026  
RE: HB0687 - Criminal Procedure - Evidence - Protecting Artists'  
Creative Expression (PACE Act)

### **The MLLC supports HB0687 - Criminal Procedure - Evidence - Protecting Artists' Creative Expression (PACE Act)**

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB0687.

Throughout the nation artists of color, both international and national, often have their music used against them as a legal weapon. The admission of this evidence in courts is disproportionate as rap is an art form practiced primarily by people of color whose communities are overpoliced, over-criminalized, and over-incarcerated.<sup>1</sup> Studies show that rap lyrics in particular have been admitted into evidence in over 500 cases against Afro-American and Latino artists.<sup>2</sup> In Maryland in particular, there is a diverse and vibrant music scene where rap artists often use a method of story-telling to express their lived experiences. However, the criminal justice system weaponizes these creative expressions and by taking them literally, disproportionately uses them against communities of color.

This bill generally seeks to prohibit the use of these creative expressions in certain situations, but also recognizes exceptions for where the admission of such evidence may be in the best interest of justice. By doing so, this bill seeks to protect Maryland artists from the unjust use and admissions of evidence of their "creative expressions." By prohibiting such evidence, the bill would particularly benefit the Latino community by ensuring that they are still entitled to their First Amendment rights and feel as though they can speak out, or tell their stories, in a time of federal unrest.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB0687.

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<sup>1</sup> [Lyrics in Limine: Rap Music and Criminal Prosecutions](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Policing of Afro-American Expression: Lyrics as Evidence in Court and the Implications on the First Amendment | Black Pre-Law Society](#)