



## RECORDING ACADEMY® LEADS FEDERAL EFFORT TO LIMIT THE USE OF SONG LYRICS IN COURT

### FOLLOWING GRAMMYS ON THE HILL®, ACADEMY MEMBERS JOIN CONGRESSMEN HANK JOHNSON AND JAMAAL BOWMAN TO REINTRODUCE THE RESTORING ARTISTIC PROTECTION ACT

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (APRIL 27, 2023)** — Today, Recording Academy® leaders and members joined Congressmen Hank Johnson (D-GA) and Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) at a press conference on Capitol Hill to announce the reintroduction of the Restoring Artistic Protection Act. Intended to protect artists' freedom of creative expression, the Restoring Artistic Protection Act would limit the use of song lyrics in court — a common practice that disproportionately affects rap and hip-hop artists. Artists and industry advocates including Academy CEO, Harvey Mason jr. and Academy Black Music Collective Chair, Rico Love shared their views on the importance of passing this legislation and ensuring all artists can create freely without fear of their work being criminalized. The full press conference can be viewed [here](#).

The announcement comes on the heels of the Recording Academy's Annual GRAMMYS on the Hill®, a two-day event that honored 13-time GRAMMY® winner Pharrell Williams, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, and Senator Bill Cassidy for their stalwart support of music creators, and connected music creators with members of Congress from both sides of the aisle to advocate for the Restoring Artistic Protection Act, the HITS Act, the American Music Fairness Act, and reform of the live event ticketing marketplace. Footage from GRAMMYS on the Hill can be found [here](#), and photos from the event are available for download [here](#). More highlights from the night can be found on [YouTube](#).

"GRAMMYS on the Hill has been bringing music creators to Capitol Hill for more than 20 years to elevate policy issues that impact our community. Today, we're proud to see our Academy members' commitment to advocacy come to life with the reintroduction of the Restoring Artistic Protection Act. We must safeguard artists' freedom to create at all costs and work to eradicate the biases that come with the unconstitutional practice of using lyrics as evidence. We are grateful to Congressmen Johnson and Bowman for their unwavering commitment to music people and look forward to working alongside them to advance this issue." – **Harvey Mason jr., CEO, Recording Academy and Rico Love, Chair, Recording Academy Black Music Collective**

"This legislation is long overdue," said **Congressman Johnson**. "For too long, artists – particularly young Black artists – have been unfairly targeted by prosecutors who use their lyrics as evidence of guilt, even though there is no evidence that the lyrics are anything more than creative expression. When you allow music and creativity to be silenced, you're opening the door for other realms of free speech to be curtailed as well. The government should not be able to silence artists simply because they write, draw, sing, or rap about controversial or taboo subjects. The Restoring Artistic Protection Act (RAP Act) would protect artists' First Amendment rights by limiting the admissibility of their lyrics as evidence in criminal and civil proceedings."

"Rap, hip-hop and every lyrical musical piece is a beautiful form of art and expression that must be protected," said **Congressman Bowman Ed.D.** "I am proud to introduce the RAP Act alongside Rep. Hank Johnson. Our judicial system disproportionately criminalizes Black and Brown people, including Black and Brown creativity. For



example, Tommy Munsdwell Canady is a young 17-year-old kid serving a life sentence whose conviction heavily relied upon lyrics he wrote. I was deeply moved to hear that Mr. Canady continues to pursue his art in the face of our carceral systems that would otherwise stifle Black art. He is not an outlier. Evidence shows when juries believe lyrics to be rap lyrics, there's a tendency to presume it's a confession, whereas lyrics for other genres of music are understood to be art, not factual reporting. This act would ensure that our evidentiary standards protect the First Amendment right to freedom of expression. We cannot imprison our talented artists for expressing their experiences nor will we let their creativity be suppressed."

There are over 500 documented cases since the 2000s where prosecutors have used lyrics as criminal evidence in court against an artist defendant. A 2016 study by criminologists at the University of California examined whether rap lyrics are evaluated using stereotypes and found that rap was evaluated more negatively than other genres of music, highlighting the possibility that bias against rap lyrics could inappropriately impact jurors when admitted as evidence to prove guilt. To right this wrong, the Recording Academy has spearheaded efforts to protect the First Amendment rights of artists nationwide by working to limit the use of an artist's lyrics — among other forms of creative expression — as evidence in criminal proceedings.

On Sept. 30, 2022, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed the Decriminalizing Artistic Expression Act into law alongside Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason jr. at a virtual bill signing.

This year, the Academy is working to advance similar legislation in several states, including Louisiana, where HB-475 passed a House vote on April 25; Missouri, where HB-353 recently advanced to the House for a vote; and in New York, where a similar bill passed through the Senate in 2022.

## **ABOUT THE RECORDING ACADEMY**

The Recording Academy represents the voices of performers, songwriters, producers, engineers, and all music professionals. Dedicated to ensuring the recording arts remain a thriving part of our shared cultural heritage, the Academy honors music's history while investing in its future through the GRAMMY Museum®, advocates on behalf of music creators, supports music people in times of need through MusiCares®, and celebrates artistic excellence through the GRAMMY Awards® — music's only peer-recognized accolade and highest achievement. As the world's leading society of music professionals, we work year-round to foster a more inspiring world for creators.

For more information about the Academy, please visit [www.grammy.com](http://www.grammy.com). For breaking news and exclusive content, follow @RecordingAcad on [Twitter](#), "like" Recording Academy on [Facebook](#), and join the Recording Academy's social communities on [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [TikTok](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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## **CONTACTS**

**Andie Cox / Chrissy Dudash**  
Recording Academy  
T. 310.392.3777



[andie.cox@recordingacademy.com](mailto:andie.cox@recordingacademy.com) / [chrissy.dudash@recordingacademy.com](mailto:chrissy.dudash@recordingacademy.com)