



Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE · IMPROVING LIVES



Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
HB 420: State and Local Parks - Play Area Accessibility -
Recreation Communication Boards Pilot Program
March 20, 2024
Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Both organizations believe people with and without disabilities in Maryland can and should live, learn, work, and play together.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Creates the Maryland Recreation Communication Boards Pilot Program in the Department of Natural Resources.
- Allows local governing boards to apply for a grant to cover the costs to build a communication board when constructing a new playground or changing an existing playground.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Communication boards promote accessibility.** Communication boards allow people with limited language to express their needs and wants by using images and symbols that represent words and ideas. For example, if a child with wanted to play on the slide, they could point to a symbol for play and a picture of a slide.
- **Communication boards are inclusive playground features.** Communication boards, especially when paired with other inclusive playground features, encourage a sense of community for children and adults. The Council collaborated with the Maryland Department of Disabilities to create a framework to support inclusive playgrounds across the state¹.
- **Communication boards benefit everyone.** Communication boards can be great tools to help children or adults with limited verbal English language skills to express themselves. For both people with disabilities and people for whom English is not their first language, communication boards help promote inclusive play and interaction with friends and family.

Communication boards are one of many actions that can move our parks towards being inclusive for all Marylanders with disabilities, therefore the DD Council and The Arc Maryland support HB 420.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, Maryland DD Council: RLondon@md-council.org
Ande Kolp, Executive Director, The Arc Maryland: AKolp@thearcmd.org

¹www.md-council.org/inclusiveplayground-framework