



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HOUSE BILL 420

STATE AND LOCAL PARKS – PLAY AREA ACCESSIBILITY – COMMUNICATION BOARDS

SUPPORT

GOOD AFTERNOON CHAIR KORMAN, VICE CHAIR BOYCE, AND ESTEEMED ENT COLLEAGUES. FOR THE RECORD I AM DELEGATE MARY LEHMAN ASKING FOR YOUR FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION OF HB 420.

HB 420 REQUIRES LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO INSTALL COMMUNICATION BOARDS IN ALL NEWLY CONSTRUCTED PLAY AREAS LOCATED WITHIN A PUBLIC PARK OR RECREATION AREA. THE BILL GIVES LOCALITIES THE OPTION OF INSTALLING COMMUNICATION BOARDS IN ALREADY-EXISTING PLAY AREAS UNDERGOING ALTERATIONS.

COMMUNICATION BOARDS ARE PERMANENT STRUCTURES THAT DISPLAY PHOTOS, SYMBOLS, OR ILLUSTRATIONS TO SUPPLEMENT OR REPLACE SPOKEN LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION. THEY ARE DESIGNED TO SUPPORT NON-VERBAL PEOPLE OR PEOPLE WITH LIMITED LANGUAGE ABILITY, ALLOWING THEM TO POINT TO IMAGES TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES.

FOR EXAMPLE, A SIGN BOARD CAN DISPLAY A PICTURE OF A SAD OR SMILEY FACE TO HELP INDIVIDUALS COMMUNICATE WHAT THEY ARE FEELING, OR IT CAN DISPLAY A PICTURE OF A TOILET OR WATER SO INDIVIDUALS CAN COMMUNICATE BASIC NEEDS.

RESEARCHAUTISM.ORG CHARACTERIZES THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION BOARDS AS FOLLOWS: BY OFFERING IMAGES AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR SPOKEN LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION BOARDS ARE MORE INCLUSIVE OF THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO VERBALIZE THEIR THOUGHTS AND CAN HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS AND THOUGHTS OF NONSPEAKING OR MINIMALLY SPEAKING INDIVIDUALS.”¹

SPECIFICALLY, THESE BOARDS IN A PLAYGROUND SETTING CAN HELP NON-VERBAL CHILDREN OR PERSONS WITH OTHER DISABILITIES COMMUNICATE WITH CAREGIVERS, PARENTS, AND PEERS. AFFECTED DISABILITIES INCLUDE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER, SPEECH APRAXIA, DEAFNESS, BLINDNESS, AND PEOPLE WITH LEARNING OR INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES.

AMENDMENTS

I HAVE FRIENDLY AMENDMENTS TO THE BILL:

1. THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES WILL CREATE A GRANT PROGRAM AND ALLOCATE \$100,000 OF STATE-WIDE PROGRAM OPEN SPACE FUNDS TO THE PROGRAM EVERY FISCAL YEAR. THE GRANT WILL COVER THE COSTS OF THE BOARDS, AS WELL AS THE COSTS OF INSTALLING THEM.
2. THE AMENDMENT CHANGES THE FUNDING SOURCE FROM LOCAL POS FUNDING TO STATE POS FUNDING.
3. THE AMENDMENT CHANGES THE DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION BOARDS BY ADDING BRAILLE SO THAT THE BOARDS ARE MORE INCLUSIVE AND MIRROR THE SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION BOARDS INSTALLED IN HOWARD COUNTY PARKS. THE FUNDS PROVIDE UP TO \$5,000 PER COMMUNICATION BOARD SO THAT LOCALITIES HAVE MORE FLEXIBILITY WITH WHAT PHOTOS AND SYMBOLS THEY CAN INCLUDE ON THEIR BOARDS AND CAN MEET WITH LOCAL ADVOCACY GROUPS TO ENSURE THEIR BOARDS BEST FIT THEIR COMMUNITY’S NEEDS.


¹ <https://researchautism.org/oaracle-newsletter/what-are-communication-boards/>.


REGARDLESS OF AGE OR DISABILITY STATUS, PEOPLE SHOULD BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE THEIR BASIC NEEDS TO OTHERS. MANDATING COMMUNICATION BOARDS AT PUBLIC PLAY AREAS ACROSS MARYLAND IS AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARD FULFILLING A NEED FOR NON-VERBAL PEOPLE AND OTHERS WHOSE DISABILITIES LIMIT THEIR VERBAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS. DOING SO WILL HELP US BUILD A MORE INCLUSIVE MARYLAND.

THANK YOU AND I URGE YOUR FAVORABLE REPORT.



Playground Communication Board

Explore to learn more → 

	am is	can	will	do	have	what?	where?	who?	not	more
you	we	want	like	need	get	when?	why?	how?	different	all done
he	she	catch	climb	come	drink	over	in	out	good	bad
they	they	eat	give	go	help	under	up	down	okay	tired
it	hurt	jump	kick	look	make	play	on	off	happy	sad
pull	push	run	say	see	stop	take	throw	turn	walk	wheel
ball	bathroom	field	friend	game	problem	slide	structure	swing	hi	bye

a b c d
 e f g h
 i j k l m n
 o p q r s t
 u v w x y z
 1 2 3 4 5
 6 7 8 9 0

Do you want to play?
 I want to play!
 This is fun!
 Let's talk.