



DATE: February 14, 2024

BILL: HB 420: State and Local Parks - Play Area Accessibility - Communication Boards

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

Dear Chair Korman,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter indicating our support with amendments for HB 420: State and Local Parks - Play Area Accessibility - Communication Boards.

Over the last two years, MDOD and the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) have worked on an initiative to expand inclusive playgrounds throughout the state of Maryland. We recently launched an Inclusive Playground Framework and Toolkit which outlines the benefits of inclusive playgrounds and strategies for implementation.

House Bill 420 would require the Department of Natural Resources and local governing bodies to construct communication boards in newly constructed play areas and authorize the addition of communication boards to existing play areas through the use of Program Open Space funds.

Playgrounds should be welcoming for all as they foster opportunities for physical, social, and emotional learning. Installing communication boards within playgrounds creates an inclusive environment where all children, regardless of their abilities, background, or differences can play together.

While Program Open Space can play an important role in funding communication boards, MDOD recognizes there are additional funding sources available. We suggest the bill be amended to allow additional funding sources beyond Program Open Space.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter. If you have any questions please contact Lisa Belcastro, Deputy Secretary, [Lisa.Belcastro@maryland.gov](mailto:Lisa.Belcastro@maryland.gov), (443) 941-5094.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary