

PRESS RELEASE

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For More Information:

Senate President's Office
410-841-3600

House Speaker's Office
410-841-3916

HOUSE SPEAKER AND SENATE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCE STATE PARK INVESTMENT COMMISSION

ANNAPOLIS, MD – Today, Senate President Bill Ferguson and Speaker of the House Adrienne A. Jones announced the creation of a legislative commission to study the needs and make future recommendations to the State park system across Maryland.

“Public outdoor spaces are essential to Marylanders’ emotional, mental, and physical health and bring people of all walks together,” said President Ferguson. “Geographic location, race, or income should not limit a person’s ability to enjoy these benefits, and it is critical that we expand these public spaces that protect Maryland’s rich natural resources.”

Over the Fourth of July weekend, nearly a dozen State parks reached capacity and turned away Maryland residents from enjoying these important State assets.

“The pandemic has highlighted now, more than ever, the importance of high quality, available, outdoor recreational opportunities for all Marylanders,” said Speaker Jones. “We must invest fully in open space that is highly accessible and offers a variety of recreational options for our residents to enjoy. I want to thank Majority Leader Eric Luedtke for spearheading a new look at our integrated State park system.”

Former Governor Parris Glendening will chair the commission.

“At a time when our citizens most needed a healthy outdoor environment, they were often met with a “Park Closed” sign,” said Governor Glendening. “The State Parks Commission provides an opportunity to move in a bold new direction. This is an opportunity to advance some of our most important goals and policies:

equity, greening and health. I am pleased to work with my fellow Marylanders, members of the General Assembly and the hard-working men and women of the park system as we move to parks that are more equitable, help our citizens be healthier, and reduce the extremes of climate change.”

Each year, the State of Maryland invests tens of millions of dollars in operating and capital expenses in State parks. However, the pandemic has demonstrated the increasing need for more and better State park offerings for recreational opportunities for Marylanders in every county.

The Commission will investigate and make recommendations regarding overcrowding in Maryland State parks, including:

- the adequacy of existing State park facilities to meet demand for recreational opportunities in the State;
- levels of operating funding and staff for existing State parks, as well as the need for capital funding to provide a high-quality experience to park visitors;
- the need for new State park offerings and any recreational deserts across Maryland; and
- the extent to which State parks and associated recreational opportunities are adequately accessible to all populations of Marylanders, including low-income Marylanders, those who lack access to a car, and Marylanders with disabilities.

Members of the Workgroup, in addition to Governor Glendening, will be:

- House Majority Leader Eric Luedtke
- Appropriations Vice Chair Mark Chang
- Delegate Regina Boyce
- Delegate Jeff Ghrist
- Senate Capital Budget Chair Craig Zucker
- Senator Sarah Elfreth
- Senator Obie Patterson
- Senator George Edwards

The Commission will begin work in September of 2021. Meetings will be livestreamed through the Maryland General Assembly website.

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