



House Bill 1098

Use of Public Funds – Playground and Athletic field Surface – Authorizations, Preferences and Prohibitions (Safe and Healthy Fields Act)

Cecil County, Maryland
Position: **OPPOSE**
Date: March 5, 2020

To: Appropriations

From: Clyde Van Dyke, Director of Parks,
Recreation

Cecil County, Maryland OPPOSES HB 1098 for the following reasons.

- A. Prohibiting the use of any State Funding for the development of athletic fields, and or playgrounds places smaller counties (such as Cecil County) at an extreme disadvantage. Program Open Space funding is the primary contributor in all Cecil County park acquisition and development projects. Should the use of these funds be further restricted the County would suffer a severe financial hardship as current, or future projects may be delayed, or canceled all together. Delayed or canceled projects would result in a loss of revenues derived from local, regional, and national sports tourism events currently hosted by Cecil County. As a member of “Team of Maryland”, Cecil County works diligently to attract venues that bolster both local and state economies. This legislation is a deterrent to that mission. Prohibiting the use of State funds would remove Cecil County from the thriving sports tourism industry which would create an undue financial hardship.
- B. One of the main goals found within the County’s strategic plan is “Safe, Healthy, and Active Communities”. Synthetic surfaces lend to safer and more consistent playing surfacing. They afford equal play to all demographics and extend hours of use to all populations increasing active participation times. Without Program Open space funding accessibility and playability will be severely impacted on both current and future park projects. This legislation would render the County inept in its ability to fulfill the Strategic plan as adopted.

- C. Cecil County shares the position held by the Maryland Association of County Parks and Recreation Administrators (MACPRA) that Program Open Space was conceived to increase land preservation and public recreation for all. Furthermore it is utilized to enhance the quality of life through equal play and accessibility without demographic bias. This bill would infringe upon that very premise.

We urge the Committee to consider the consequences of this proposed legislation and return an UNFAVORABLE REPORT.