



Maryland Municipal League  
*The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns*

TESTIMONY

February 21, 2020

**Committee:** House Environment and Transportation

**Bill:** HB 203 - Community Parks and Playgrounds - Baltimore and Howard County - Expansion

**Position:** Oppose

**Reason for Position:**

The Maryland Municipal League opposes HB 203 which would alter the purpose of the community parks and playgrounds programs to include making grants available to the governing bodies of Baltimore County and Howard County. The Community Parks and Playgrounds program was established in 2002 under the Department of Natural Resources. The intent of the program is to provide funding to focus on restoring existing parks and playgrounds and green spaces. Originally, the program was open to both counties and municipalities and was funded at approximately \$5 million.

In 2009, recognizing that counties receive Program Open Space (POS) monies from the State and municipalities do not, legislation was passed to make the Community Parks and Playgrounds (CP&P) program municipal only. In FY 2011, funding was reduced to \$2.5 million where it has remained every year with the exception of FY 2016 when it was funded at \$5 million. In the first seven years that the program existed, counties received a significant portion of the funds in this program. In fact, in FY 2006, the entire amount was allocated to 13 county projects, with no money going to municipal projects that fiscal year.

In FY 2020, counties will receive a total of \$48 million in Program Open Space monies from the state. It's important to note that municipalities do not receive POS monies unless their counties voluntarily choose to share a portion of their funding with their municipalities in a given year. In FY 2020, only nine counties shared any of their POS money with their municipalities. In FY 2021, counties are scheduled to receive a total

of \$58 million in POS monies. \$7 million of this money will go to Baltimore County and \$3.7 million will go to Howard County. Together, these two counties will receive over \$10 million, which is 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the total amount of POS monies available to the counties in FY 2021. By comparison, only \$2.5 million is available in the CP&P program for all 157 cities and towns.

There is a chart attached to our testimony that illustrates the amount of money that counties currently receive from Program Open Space and how much they are scheduled to receive in FY 2021 versus the amount of money that municipalities have received in CP&P monies in the current fiscal year. The Department of Natural Resources reports that in the last five grant application rounds, they received an average of 75 applications each year from municipalities requesting an average of \$9 million per year and they have only been able to fund approximately 22 projects a year with the \$2.5 million in funding. If a municipality applies for CP&P funding in a given year, but does not receive a grant, they will have absolutely no parks and recreation funding available until the next grant application round, when they may or may not receive funding in that particular year. Please take a minute to look through the municipal projects funded using money from this program [Community Parks and Playgrounds Program Projects](#).

In the first seven years that counties were eligible for funding in this program, Baltimore county alone received over \$5 million and Howard county received over a half a million dollars. For two of the largest and wealthiest counties in the State to now come back seven years later and request funding from a municipal-only program that is funded at a total of \$2.5 million for all 157 cities and towns is unfair and unbalanced. Part of the formula used to determine the amount of POS monies that a county receives is based on population, so these two counties are not being shortchanged in any way. There is one county with only one municipality. What about the three counties with only two municipalities, or the two counties with three municipalities? Where does it stop? Before you know it, we're right back where we started. We'll have a program that is already oversubscribed serving not only 157 municipalities, but all the counties as well.

In all these years, MML has never come to the General Assembly to ask for a direct allocation of POS monies. Our cities and towns consider CP&P as their "Program Open Space". For these reasons, the League requests an unfavorable report on HB 203.

**For more information contact:**

Scott A. Hancock	Executive Director
Candace L. Donoho	Government Relations Specialist
Bill Jorch	Manager, Government Relations & Research
Justin Fiore	Manager, Government Relations

COUNTY PROGRAM OPEN SPACE ALLOCATIONS VS.  
MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS GRANT ALLOCATIONS

County (with number of municipalities)	FY 2020 Program Open Space Allocated by the State	FY 2021 Program Open Space Proposed Allocation	FY 2020 County POS monies <b>VOLUNTARILY</b> shared with municipalities	FY 2020 Community Parks and Playgrounds <b>GRANT</b> monies provided to municipalities
Allegany (7)	\$ 533,969	\$ 586,000	\$ 113,500	\$ 200,000
Anne Arundel (2)	5,791,148	6,376,000	1,454,497	101,739
Baltimore City (N/A)	9,838,472	10,211,000	N/A	260,000
<b>Baltimore County (0)</b>	<b>6,522,734</b>	<b>7,172,000</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>No municipalities</b>
Calvert (2)	578,052	635,000	-0-	-0-
Caroline (10)	252,013	277,000	91,000	206,995
Carroll (8)	1,298,046	1,424,000	324,512	300,000
Cecil (8)	672,244	732,000	-0-	113,541
Charles (3)	1,190,526	1,302,000	-0-	-0-
Dorchester (9)	215,606	238,000	-0-	-0-
Frederick (12)	1,373,672	1,522,000	1,002,482	214,000
Garrett (8)	268,168	294,000	154,318	158,815
Harford (3)	1,930,191	2,112,000	-0-	42,049
<b>Howard (0)</b>	<b>3,433,872</b>	<b>3,751,000</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>No municipalities</b>
Kent (5)	161,940	178,000	3,870	199,580
Montgomery (21)	8,663,044	9,520,000	589,727	-0-
Prince George's (27)	7,435,990	8,129,000	-0-	325,000
Queen Anne's (8)	350,145	386,000	-0-	-0-
St. Mary's (1)	652,805	720,000	-0-	-0-
Somerset (2)	154,745	170,000	-0-	-0-
Talbot (5)	366,824	403,000	-0-	322,400
Washington (9)	1,014,952	1,118,000	510,210	-0-
Wicomico (8)	676,268	746,000	-0-	202,129
Worcester (4)	656,283	723,000	-0-	72,472
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$48,031,709</b>	<b>\$58,722,000</b>	<b>\$4,244,116</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>

**PROGRAM OPEN SPACE:** Provides financial and technical assistance to counties for the planning, acquisition, and/or development of recreation land or open space areas. When a person buys a house or land in a county or a municipality, a 0.5% State property transfer tax is collected which funds Program Open Space.

**COMMUNITY PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS:** Provides funding to municipalities to focus on restoring existing and creating new park and green space systems in Maryland's cities and towns to help rehabilitate, expand, or improve existing parks. Funding can help develop environmentally oriented parks and recreation projects, create new green spaces, or purchase and install playground equipment in older neighborhoods and intensely developed areas throughout the State.