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February 19, 2020

Chairman Kumar Barve
House Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251, Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Barve;

Recognizing the limited opportunities municipalities have for revenue sources dedicated to parks; it was with dismay that I reviewed House Bill 203, Community Parks and Playgrounds. The Community Parks and Playgrounds Program (the program) enables communities like Taneytown to provide recreational opportunities for our citizens we otherwise may not be able to fund. Whether used to replace playground equipment at the end of its serviceable life or developing new recreational opportunities; funding through the program is critical to municipalities. Noting that the program is funded at 2.5 million dollars, competition to secure funding is stiff even when limited to municipal candidates. Opening the program to large Counties such as Baltimore and Howard will likely deplete the modest funds that our 157 municipalities compete for today.

The City of Taneytown (the City) has utilized the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program for several park projects that would not have been possible without such assistance. In FY 2020, the City secured funding through the program to assist in the ongoing engineering and development of the City's Bollinger Park, a passive recreational area that will provide a local opportunity for our citizens, neighbors and visitors to enjoy multipurpose trails in a more natural, and one might say more calming environment than other municipal parks that include playing fields and amenities for more active recreational pursuits. Much of this park acreage was donated to the over twenty years ago, and this funding has enabled the City to move forward towards fulfilling the long-held vision of a nature park.

Funding through the program has also allowed the City to complete several other improvements in years prior. In FY 2010, funding was secured to allow the City to replace playground equipment that was at the end of its serviceable life in Taneytown Memorial Park. A permanent storage building for sports programs utilizing The City's Roberts Mill Park was constructed in FY 2009 using program funding along with replacing playground equipment and an aged wooden pavilion in that park with modern facilities requiring less ongoing maintenance.

Acknowledging the impact funding through the program over the last decade has had for the City, I oppose house bill 203 and hope that the negative impact this bill may produce for municipalities will be strongly considered by the committee.

Sincerely;

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bradley J. Wantz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bradley J. Wantz, Mayor