

NVR

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February 19th, 2020

HB-203 Public Safety – Community Parks and Playgrounds - OPPOSE

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

Chair Barve and members of the committee,

I have the honor and privilege to represent the Town of Hancock in Washington County. Hancock is a small town in rural western Maryland, with a population under 2,000 and a limited tax base.

Hancock, like many small towns, has in the past and will again in the future avail itself of the grant programs available through the Department of Natural Resources to improve its parks, tourist attractions, and other public spaces. In FY2011, Hancock received \$24,000 through the Community Parks and Playgrounds grant program to rehabilitate the Community Center Playground. Furthermore, the Town is preparing an application to help fund a new playground located in the Canal Park, a tourist destination popular with hikers, boaters, cyclists, and other visitors to the town.

Community Parks and Playgrounds is a small pool of grant money available only to municipalities. Much of the funding provided goes to smaller towns like Hancock that struggle to raise the funds for projects like this without assistance from the state. This grant funding is vital to maintaining public facilities that otherwise slide into neglect from lack of resources. Allowing non-municipal counties access to this grant pool will dangerously dilute the effectiveness of the program in the places that need it the most.

Baltimore and Howard Counties already have access to DNR's Project Open Space grant program, and between them in 2020 they received 20% of all allocated monies under that program. The individual awards for each county significantly exceeded the entire budget for Community Parks and Playgrounds.

Hancock can attest that the modest investment in the Community Parks and Playgrounds works. The positive impact on small municipalities is considerable, and we ask you not to dilute this program by expanding the eligibility pool to include non-municipal counties.

Sincerely,

Robert Van Rens

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On Behalf of the Town of Hancock

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