



February 21, 2020

Chairman Barve and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Environment and Transportation Committee, Room 251
Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: HB 203 Community Parks and Playgrounds Program – Baltimore County and Howard County
- Expansion**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the City of Gaithersburg, I am writing to convey our opposition to HB 203, which expands the jurisdictions eligible for funding under the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program to include Baltimore and Howard Counties. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Program Open Space administers the program, and grant awards are currently limited to municipalities, recognizing that municipalities have fewer revenue generating opportunities than do Maryland's counties. There are 127 municipalities in Maryland and the program receives \$2.5 million per year to fund approved grant proposals.

Within our 10 square mile border, Gaithersburg is fortunate to have nearly 30 parks that offer an array of recreational activities, from hiking and biking trails, to open fields and ponds, to play spaces inspired by the cultural, economic and natural history of the area. The flexible grants have helped to supplement our already stretched resources for maintaining and preserving park areas in our community. Since 2002, Gaithersburg has received just over \$285,000 to support playground equipment and enhancements at six parks, with a seventh pending grant determination this spring.

Allowing two of the largest and wealthiest counties access to a highly competitive, limited resource fund that is specifically designed to assist Maryland's municipalities in providing activities and recreation that improve the quality of life for residents and visitors, could be devastating.

For these reasons, the City of Gaithersburg urges an unfavorable report for HB 203.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. You may also contact the Legislative Affairs Manager for the City of Gaithersburg, Jessica Kwasny. She can be reached at jess.kwasny@gaithersburgmd.gov or 301.805.1090.

Sincerely,

Jud Ashman
Mayor

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