



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY
PARK & RECREATION ADMINISTRATORS
(MACPRA)

**2021 MD General Assembly
House Bill 458**

Requiring local governing bodies to submit a "Visitor Behavior Policy" for visitors to parks to be eligible for State Program Open Space funding

Maryland Association of County Park &
Recreation Administrators

TO: Environment and Transportation

Date: January 26, 2021

FROM: Steve Miller, MACPRA President

Position: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Association of County Park & Recreation Administrators (MACPRA) is an affiliate of the Maryland Association of Counties and represents the Parks and Recreation departments of all 23 counties and Baltimore City – the professionals engaged in the delivery of Parks and Recreation services throughout Maryland.

On behalf of association members, **MACPRA OPPOSES HB 458.**

The State of Maryland boasts some of the finest parks systems in the United States and has long been a haven for nature enthusiasts across the country. Over the last 50 years, State Program Open Space has been a key funding mechanism to preserve land and develop open spaces to make recreation and leisure opportunities possible in public parks.

While MACPRA strongly supports positive behaviors from its park visitors (to protect natural areas and waterways, to limit pollution, and to limit disturbances to wildlife), the proposed legislation is ineffective and does not help achieve this goal.

Park visitor policies can have a positive, albeit limited, impact on visitor behavior. However, the development of policy and display of signage/public notification does not guarantee desired behaviors. The most effective enforcement tool at the disposal of park agencies is manpower to enforce policies. Most agencies in Maryland already have existing park rules but budget limitations



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make it impossible to staff all facilities at all times in order to gain compliance for desired behaviors. A legislated requirement to produce, enhance or implement policy that is unenforceable is not viewed by MACPRA as effective law.

In addition to the impractical nature of enforcement of this legislation, MACPRA is strongly opposed to tying additional obligations to eligibility for State Program Open Space. Existing criteria for POS eligibility is sufficient and MACPRA does not believe the State should enact additional legislation that could disqualify Counties from this important source of funding.

MACPRA will always encourage its members (and visitors) to keep parks safe, clean and attractive and to preserve natural areas wherever possible. This legislation, however, does not achieve this goal and imposes an unenforceable mandate.

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