



MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY
PARK & RECREATION ADMINISTRATORS
(MACPRA)

**SB541 Natural Resources – Maryland Park Service and State Parks –
Alterations (Great Maryland Outdoors Act)**

*Repealing the Park Advisory Commission and establishing the Parks and Recreation Commission in DNR;
addressing infrastructure, capacity and accessibility needs within the Maryland Park Service and State
parks;*

February 14, 2022

MACPRA Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

“The Great Maryland Outdoors Act” is an ambitious and long overdue investment in the landscape, infrastructure and human services associated with the Maryland State Park Service. The pandemic response revealed the service gaps and capacity limits of our public service systems on multiple levels within our communities. Access to the restorative value of nature and the outdoors contained within our State Parks was one of those critical gaps – access that was not just geographically limited, but also compromised by capacity limitations due to low staffing levels, inadequate infrastructure, and outdated public communication strategies.

MACPRA recognizes the funding for this initiative is primarily sourced from the \$174M of State General Funds pledged in previous legislative action to payback the designated account established for land conservation and local park development purposes.

The great Maryland outdoors is not limited to State Parks. Local park land is a vital link to the public’s outdoor recreation experience, and the incentive and support to local government to expand the reach of conservation through the creation of community parks was part of the strategic design that established the real estate transfer tax as an enduring and sustaining funding strategy for Maryland’s landmark Program Open Space initiative in 1969. This legacy is still relevant today.

MACPRA supports this legislative proposal with one amendment and a recommendation.

The amendment simply extends the geographic reach to establish a “Partnership Park”. The legislation is prescriptive to the northeastern region of Montgomery County for the establishment of the Freedman’s Historical Park. MACPRA recommends that the sponsors broaden the scope of the General Assembly’s review of other proposals that meet the partnership definition --- when State, local government and/or non-profit organizations forms partnerships to increase public access and conserve and interpret the historic landscape.

The recommendation links the loss of the local payback of Program Open Space funds to the Administration’s FY2023 capital budget allocation to the Parks and Playground Infrastructure (PPI) program. MACPRA



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recognizes the legislative leadership's 2022 initiative to appropriate \$85 to local government for park restoration and expansion initiatives. This funding level is replicated in FY2023 with \$75M currently undesignated for local park projects. MACPRA has held conversations with lead sponsors and is assured that support exists for the FY2023 PPI investment. MACPRA further recommends that the allocation of the undesignated portion of this fund be delegated to the MD-DNR with input from MACPRA leadership.

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.