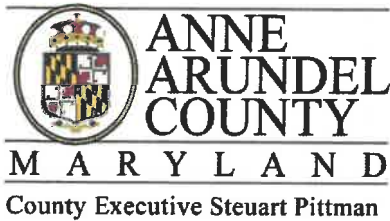


# **Park Explorers Pilot - AACo Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Leys

Position: FAV



March 3, 2022

**House Bill 749**

**Natural Resources – Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot  
Program – Establishment**

**Anne Arundel County Delegation**

**Position: FAVORABLE**

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 749, which will establish a Maryland Park Explorers Pilot Program in the Department of Natural Resources to serve youth in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Cavert counties. This program will encourage outdoor recreation by connecting children to parks and programming.

Anne Arundel County shares the legislature's commitment to supporting and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities. With nearly 50 active capital projects in its six year plan, the County Department of Recreation and Parks continues to create public spaces that enhance our health and connect us to nature. We are creating better park access for people with disabilities, transforming the idea of a county-wide trail network from a concept to reality, and investing in water access projects. The pilot program created in House Bill 749 will help us towards our goal of providing a diverse range of accessible recreational facilities and programs to serve the needs of all County residents.

This pilot program will help to support our communities that have minimal access to green space, and provide outdoor and recreational opportunities for youth who have had to forgo programming during the pandemic. The grant funding available through this program will enable the Anne Arundel County Department of Recreation and Parks to implement free and accessible programming that bridges socioeconomic and resource gaps for underserved youth, promotes the positive impacts of spending time outdoors, provides conservation-related messaging, and incorporates local history and diverse cultural contributions.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 749.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stuart Pittman", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Stuart Pittman  
County Executive



STEUART PITTMAN, COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
JESSICA LEYS, DIRECTOR  
1 HARRY S. TRUMAN PARKWAY  
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401  
410-222-7867



February 23, 2022

The Honorable Michelle Guyton  
Lowe House Office Building, Room 306  
6 Bladen St.  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for HB 749 – Natural Resources – Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program- Establishment

Dear Delegate Guyton and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support of House Bill 749, which establishes a Maryland Explorers Pilot program within the Department of Natural Resources to serve youth within Anne Arundel, Baltimore and Calvert counties.

This initiative aligns with our mission to “create opportunities, enjoy life, explore nature and restore health and wellness”. If Anne Arundel County receives this appropriation it would allow us to expand our natural resources and environmental programming, both within our department as well as with our ongoing relationship with the Anne Arundel County Board of Education.

Thank you for considering my support of this bill. If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me at 410-222-7867.

Sincerely,

Jessica Leys  
Director

**BaltimoreCounty\_FAV\_HB0749.pdf**

Uploaded by: Joel Beller

Position: FAV



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.  
*County Executive*

JOEL N. BELLER  
*Acting Director of Government Affairs*

JOSHUA M. GREENBERG  
*Associate Director of Government Affairs*

MIA R. GOGEL  
*Associate Director of Government Affairs*

**BILL NO.:**           **House Bill 749**

**TITLE:**             **Natural Resources - Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program - Establishment**

**SPONSOR:**         **Delegate Guyton**

**COMMITTEE:**      **Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**POSITION:**        **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**             **March 30, 2022**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 749 – Natural Resources - Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program – Establishment. This legislation would create a local Park Explorers Pilot Program to connect children to parks and programs that encourage outdoor recreation.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has kept children, parents, and residents across the world in their homes for nearly two years. Many children have had to forgo their favorite recreational programs to allow community members to keep their distance and stop the spread of a deadly virus. Other children have now become of age to join recreational programming, but may be unaware of what is available to them due to varying availability. Additionally, many face geographic and structural barriers to green space, and have never been able to access all the parks, playgrounds and opportunities for outdoor exercise that Baltimore County has to offer.

The Maryland Park Explorers Program would connect outdoor recreational resources to the communities that need them. This pilot program would supply grant funding to certain local jurisdictions to implement free, accessible, conveniently located programming in communities without easy access to parks. Curricula will encourage outdoor recreation and educate youth on the benefits of conservation and environmental stewardship. Since taking office, the Olszewski Administration has utilized Program Open Space money to aggressively expand the County’s stock of publicly accessible parks, HB 749 would further the County’s objectives by providing access to these vital public resources.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 749. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at [jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov).

# **HB 749 - Favorable - Guyton - Senate.pdf**

Uploaded by: Michele Guyton

Position: FAV

MICHELE GUYTON  
Legislative District 42B  
Baltimore County

Ways and Means Committee

Early Childhood Subcommittee

Education Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 306  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3793 • 301-858-3793  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3793  
Michele.Guyton@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 30, 2022

**HB749 - Favorable**

Dear Chair Pinsky and Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I writing here to request your consideration of HB 749 which established a Maryland Park Explorers Pilot Program in Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties.

According to the Sierra Club, 28 million children do not live within 10 miles of green recreational space! PRIOR to COVID the American child spends an estimated less than 10 mins minutes a day outdoors and an average of 7-8 hours a day inside interacting with electronics and sitting in front of a screen. (BEFORE virtual schooling). The evidence of negative mental, behavioral, social and physical health effects of this time in front of screens has been well- documented. Recent analyses indicate that the problems are not just associated with screen time, but may actually also be associated with what kids are NOT doing. Going outside. HB 749 will encourage children to engage in outdoor play and exploration, and fight childhood obesity by building physically healthier children while expanding their knowledge of the environment and promoting social and behavioral health.

While the benefits of environmental education are well-documented for both the health of the child and the health of the environment, much of our exposure is inequitable. This bill requires that these programs prioritize children in areas that lack green space and equitable access to outdoor environmental experiences and collect demographic data about their participants.

Thank you for your time and I respectfully request a favorable report on HB749 to establish a County Park Explorer Pilot Program to teach youth participants the importance of the environment and encourage children to spend greater time exploring and learning in our natural surroundings.

Sincerely,

Delegate Michele Guyton, District 42B

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Delegate Michele Guyton".