Position: SB 56 Support with Amendments

January 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

On behalf of KaBoom, the national nonprofit dedicated to ending playspace inequity, I support SB 56 and Senator Ellis's goal to ensure equity in the distribution of Program Open Space funds in Maryland. As we see in our work everyday, local parks are critical opportunities to build quality playspaces where all children can thrive.

We define playspace inequity as the lack of access to quality playspaces as a result of systemic racism and historic disinvestment in communities of color. As you can see from the attached document, we have created a model for addressing playspace inequity that uses data and mapping to identify where playspace inequities exist. Then, we work in partnership with kids and communities to design and build playspaces that reflect their unique needs and priorities in order to ensure that every kid ultimately has access to a great place to play where they live and learn. We urge Senator Ellis and this Committee to consider further defining equity in this legislation and how the Maryland Legislature can ensure Program Open Spaces funds are equitably distributed.

We respectfully urge a favor report on SB 56 with amendments addressing our concerns and thank Senator Ellis for his leadership.

Thank you,

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4 Steps to Mapping Playspace Inequity in Your Community

KABOOM! is the national nonprofit dedicated to ending playspace inequity. We do this by working with communities to create great places for every kid to **play where they live and learn**. Playspaces are an equity issue—playspace inequity is the lack of access to quality playspaces as a result of systemic racism and historic disinvestment in communities of color.

Our mapping work helps city leaders identify playspace inequities across their school, park, and housing systems, providing a data-informed starting point for determining where investment and resources are needed most. The analysis also supports community efforts to ensure their children have access to critical needs that are the foundation of a healthy childhood. Here is the way that KABOOM! maps and analyzes playspace inequity in a community or system.

STEP 1
Where are the playspaces?

We use existing data sources (e.g., Google maps, Google earth, existing municipal source data) to create a map locating all the playspaces in a community or system.

STEP 2
Who lives near those playspaces?

Then we layer in community demographic data including race, ethnicity, income, and child density.

STEP 3
What's the condition of those playspaces [if there are playspaces there already?]?

Next, we send a team of playground equipment and structure experts to analyze the quality of the playspaces using industry standards for playground safety and quality.

STEP 4
Does the current playspace meet community needs?

Finally, we engage community members (kids and adults) to understand what a quality playspace that meets their needs could look like.
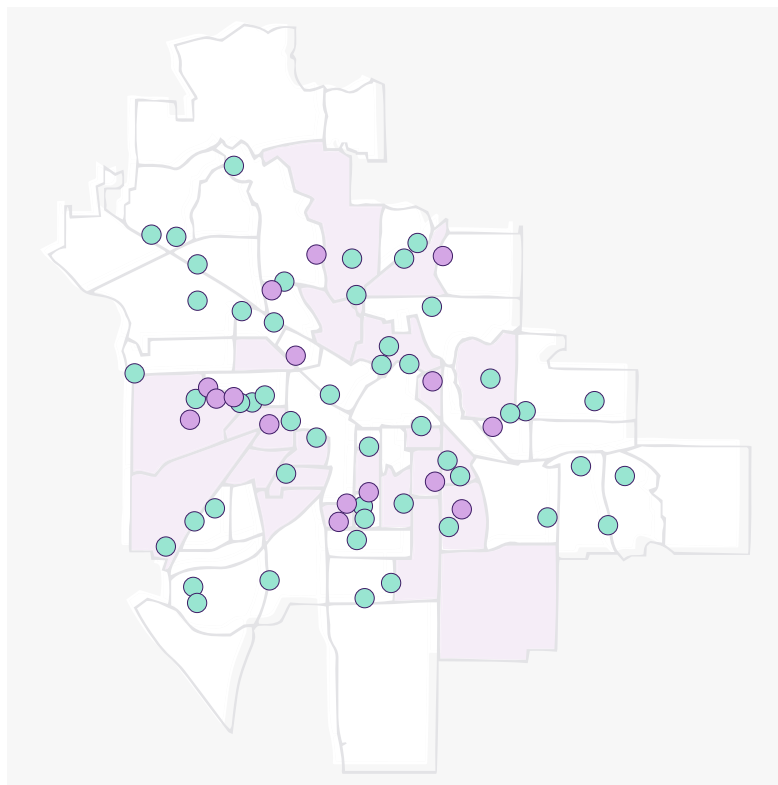
We then create a vibrant, easy-to-digest report that can be used to advocate for playspace equity, and determine where and what type of investments are needed to end playspace inequity across the community or system. We'd love to partner with you on this critically impactful work for the kids in your community.

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Many cities across the U.S. do not have a data-informed understanding of the availability and quality of playspaces across their municipal systems. Without this data, it's difficult for city leaders to understand what the gaps in access to quality playspaces are, and how those gaps usually align to patterns of continued disinvestment and disparate outcomes in health, resiliency, and learning for kids of color. KABOOM! is committed to partnering with cities across the U.S. to create data-guided maps for understanding and addressing playspace inequities at scale. Our mapping team uses GIS technology to create data and community-informed maps of quality playspaces across systems.

Playspace Equity Mapping Case Study

KABOOM! recently partnered with a mid-size US city to understand what playspace access and quality looked like across the park system. Using existing data about where playspaces were located, local insights about playspace quality, and community demographic information, KABOOM! was able to identity patterns of playspace inequity occurring within the parks system.

Prioritized Communities for Playspace Investment

- ● Playgrounds in Critical or Poor Condition
- ● Playgrounds
- ◌ Priority Census Tracts
- ○ Census Tracts

INSIGHTS FROM PLAYSPACE MAPPING

70% of playgrounds in poor or critical condition where located in communities with a higher concentration of Black, Indiginous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents per capita than the rest of the city

More than **80%** of the playgrounds that were removed between 2016 and 2021 were located in primarily BIPOC communities

80% of the new playgrounds built between 2016 and 2021 were located communities with less BIPOC residents per capita than the city at large

With data about playspace inequity in hand, KABOOM! and the city are now partnering together to drive investment into the communities that need it most—addressing playspace inequity at scale.

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