



## Maryland Municipal League

*The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns*

# TESTIMONY

January 25, 2022

**Committee:** Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Bill:** \_\_SB 96 - Community Parks and Playgrounds - Charles County - Basketball Courts

**Position:** Oppose

**Reason for Position:**

The Maryland Municipal League respectfully opposes SB 96, which would alter the purpose of the Community Parks and Playgrounds program to include making grants available to the governing body of Charles County.

The Community Parks and Playgrounds (CP&P) program was established in 2002 under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The intent of the program is to provide funding to focus on restoring existing parks and playgrounds and green spaces. Originally, the program was open to both counties and municipalities and was funded at approximately \$5 million.

The CP&P program ran tangentially to Program Open Space (POS) until 2009; counties were allocated POS funding annually, and could voluntarily choose to share a portion of that funding with their municipalities. In turn, CP&P was available to both counties and municipalities. However, in the first seven years of the CP&P program, counties received a significant portion of CP&P funds. In fact, in FY 2006, the entire amount was allocated to 13 county projects, with no money going to municipal projects. In 2009, recognizing the uneven allocation of POS monies in favor of counties, legislation was passed to make the CP&P program accessibly only to municipalities.

Allocation is not the only way in which these programs have historically favored counties; CP&P's pot is also much smaller. In FY 2011, CP&P funding was reduced to \$2.5 million, where it has remained every year apart from FY 2016 when it was funded at

\$5 million. By contrast, counties received a total of \$53.6 million in POS monies in FY 2022.

If a municipality applies for CP&P funding but does not receive a grant, they will have absolutely no parks and recreation funding available until the next grant application round; even then, there is no guarantee. The Department of Natural Resources receives an average of 75 applications each year from municipalities requesting an average of \$9 million per year and they have only been able to fund approximately 22 projects a year with the \$2.5 million in funding. This year, DNR received 69 grant applications requesting a total of \$9.3 million in funding. For a county to request funding from a municipal-only program that is funded at a total of \$2.5 to \$5 million for all 157 cities and towns is unfair and unbalanced.

In all these years, MML has never come to the General Assembly to ask for a direct allocation of POS monies. Our cities and towns consider CP&P as their "Program Open Space." CP&P is already a limited resource for local governments; we cannot afford to dilute it further. For these reasons, the League requests an unfavorable report on SB 96.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

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