

SB 96_UNF_MML.pdf

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Position: UNF



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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SB0096_DNR_LOI_EHEA_1-25-22.pdf

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Position: INFO



Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

Bill Number: Senate Bill 96

Short Title: Community Parks and Playgrounds Program – Charles County – Basketball Courts

Department's Position: Letter of Information

Explanation of Department's Position

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides the following information on SB 96. Senate Bill 96 would alter the purpose of the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program to include making grants available to Charles County for the construction and maintenance of basketball courts at county parks with baseball fields.

The Community Parks and Playground Program, administered by DNR, provides flexible grants exclusively to municipal governments to respond to the need for assistance to rehabilitate, expand or improve existing parks, create new parks, develop environmentally oriented parks and recreation projects, or purchase and install playground equipment in older neighborhoods and intensely developed areas throughout the state. All of Maryland's 157 municipalities are eligible to apply for funding through this program. The FY 2022 budget includes \$5 million for 31 projects. Over the past 5 years, the department received an average of 75 applications annually requesting an average of \$9 million/year, funding an average of 23 projects/year totaling \$3.0 million/year.

As a complement to the Community Parks and Playgrounds Program, Program Open Space (POS) Local provides financial and technical assistance to every county and Baltimore City for the planning, acquisition, and/or development of recreation land or open space areas including improvements to sports courts and fields. DBM allocates POS Local funds annually to every county and Baltimore City according to a formula. Projects funded through POS Local are determined by the counties and Baltimore City that submit applications for funding to the Department for review and submission to the Board of Public Works for approval. Counties also determine how much POS Local funding is used for projects in municipalities which varies by county and from year to year. The FY 2022 budget includes \$53.375 million in POS Local funds. Charles County's FY 2022 allocation was \$1.317 million and they have an additional \$1.775 million in unencumbered POS Local funds from prior fiscal years. Public basketball courts are an eligible use of POS Local funds.

For any additional information, please feel free to contact our Legislative and Constituent Services Director, Bunky Luffman.

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