



House Bill 1332

State and Local Parks – Playground Accessibility – Communication Boards

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

Date: March 9, 2022

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1332. This bill requires local parks departments to use local Program Open Space funds to purchase specific communication board technology for their recreation facilities.

In the over half-century since Program Open Space was implemented, the State of Maryland and its counties have been immensely successful at both expanding lands made available to the public and developing those lands into world class recreation facilities. Program Open Space has advanced numerous health and economic benefits to Marylanders, a central element in our state's "quality of life" proposition.

Historically, the General Assembly has also played an important role with the success of Program Open Space. Legislation has helped to prioritize its use for the balanced goals of land preservation and active resident access. This visioning role should remain the province of a citizen legislature, to guide and refine the scope of the program as times change. HB 1332, however, goes beyond broad vision-setting and requires counties to use program funds to install potentially costly communication boards at each of their parks. Not only does mandating such an expense go against the original design of Program Open Space, but it also hampers a county's ability to pursue more cost effective or innovative solutions that may be more appropriate for their community.

If the Committee seeks to advance the availability of this technology for the use of park visitors, a central procurement with either planned use by local parks, or local opt-in to "ride" on the statewide contract, could promote wider adoption of this technology.

HB 1332 could undermine a very productive state/local collaborative model for one of our state's showcase policy innovations in Program Open Space. The bill would impose a costly mandate on local parks departments, hampering counties' continued efforts with acquisition and park development. Accordingly, MACo requests a **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 1332.