



## MARYLAND ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY PARK & RECREATION ADMINISTRATORS (MACPRA)

### **HB717 Natural Resources – Public Lands – Acquisition, Staffing, Operations and Funding**

February 10, 2025

#### **MACPRA Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

The Maryland Association of County Park and Recreation Administrators (MACPRA) supports HB717 altering provisions of law regarding the Department of Natural Resources acquisition of real property and establishing a Land and Property Management Program in the Department. In addition to the benefits provided to the State Park system, the bill, as written, provides additional flexibility to Counties for how Program Open Space funds can be utilized, which is a high priority of County recreation and park professionals. This flexibility better equips Counties to address local needs for acquisition and/or development projects that enhance quality of life in the communities that we serve.

To this end, MACPRA would like to offer two additional amendments to the bill that would further enhance the ability of Counties to meet local recreational needs:

1. **To remove the \$25,000 / year ceiling when utilizing POS Acquisition funds to develop Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plans (LPPRP).** MACPRA proposes that Counties be permitted to apply for up to \$125,000 of acquisition funds in any given year to support the next LPPRP update. This simple change would save time and resources for locals and DNR staff.
2. **Amend language regarding the local match requirements for projects that utilize POS funding.** Based on land acquisition goals, Counties are required to provide a certain local match on development projects that utilize POS funds. However, the current law requires local match on the entire project rather than a local match to just the POS funding amount. This greatly limits the ability of Counties, particularly smaller ones, to stack or leverage grants off each other to accomplish bigger projects. MACPRA proposes that local match requirements should be applied only to the amount of POS funds utilized for a given project.

We would be pleased to work with DNR staff to craft specific language into the bill to include these proposals and appreciate any consideration the proposed amendments can be given.

*The Maryland Association of County Park & Recreation Administrators (MACPRA) is an affiliate of the Maryland Association of Counties and represents the Parks and Recreation departments of all 23 counties and Baltimore City – the professionals engaged in the delivery of Parks and Recreation services throughout Maryland.*