



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 12, 2025

Committee: House Environment & Transportation

Bill: HB 717 - Natural Resources - Public Lands - Acquisition, Staffing, Operations, and Funding

Position: Oppose

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) respectfully opposes House Bill 717, which authorizes transferring funds from Program Open Space to the Forest or Park Reserve Fund.

Program Open Space (“POS”) is designed to provide funding for the acquisition of land for public parks, recreation, and conservation. Local governments rely heavily on Program Open Space for our own recreation and open space development. POS is already in high demand, with all 157 municipalities and 24 counties eligible to apply for the \$32.1 million local pot in FY 2024. Many applicants are denied or do not receive the full funding they requested.

Reallocating these funds could reduce the already-limited money available for local projects, eroding our municipalities' ability to invest in their own parks and open space initiatives. Current POS funding is already stretched thin; we cannot afford depletion.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests that the committee provide House Bill 717 with an unfavorable report. For more information, please contact Angelica Bailey Thupari, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at angelicab@mdmunicipal.org or (443) 756-0071. Thank you for your consideration.

The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.