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**BILL NO.:**           **House Bill 749**

**TITLE:**             **Natural Resources - Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program - Establishment**

**SPONSOR:**         **Delegate Guyton**

**COMMITTEE:**      **Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**POSITION:**        **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**             **March 30, 2022**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** House Bill 749 – Natural Resources - Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program – Establishment. This legislation would create a local Park Explorers Pilot Program to connect children to parks and programs that encourage outdoor recreation.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has kept children, parents, and residents across the world in their homes for nearly two years. Many children have had to forgo their favorite recreational programs to allow community members to keep their distance and stop the spread of a deadly virus. Other children have now become of age to join recreational programming, but may be unaware of what is available to them due to varying availability. Additionally, many face geographic and structural barriers to green space, and have never been able to access all the parks, playgrounds and opportunities for outdoor exercise that Baltimore County has to offer.

The Maryland Park Explorers Program would connect outdoor recreational resources to the communities that need them. This pilot program would supply grant funding to certain local jurisdictions to implement free, accessible, conveniently located programming in communities without easy access to parks. Curricula will encourage outdoor recreation and educate youth on the benefits of conservation and environmental stewardship. Since taking office, the Olszewski Administration has utilized Program Open Space money to aggressively expand the County’s stock of publicly accessible parks, HB 749 would further the County’s objectives by providing access to these vital public resources.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 749. For more information, please contact Joel Beller, Acting Director of Government Affairs at [jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jbeller@baltimorecountymd.gov).