



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

SB 680: State and Local Parks – Playground Accessibility – Communication Boards

March 1, 2022

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The DD Council is led by people with developmental disabilities and their families. One of our priorities is to advocate for and fund inclusive recreation programs and activities that are fully accessible. This bill is another step towards doing just that. Communication boards help ensure that our public recreational spaces are inclusive and accessible to all people, particularly children with disabilities.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- This bill requires that the Department of Natural Resources and local governing bodies add a communications board to all public playgrounds in the State by October 1, 2027.

WHY is this legislation important?

- Only 33 of Maryland's State parks currently have accessible playgrounds, and this is one of many changes needed to make additional playgrounds accessible to children with disabilities. None of them have communication boards.
- A communication board is a device that displays photos, symbols, or illustrations to help people with limited language skills express themselves.
- Communications boards encourage a sense of community as well as an inclusive, more equitable play environment.
- Ultimately, It provides children with and without disabilities the opportunity to play at public playgrounds together.

SB 680 takes a proactive approach to ensuring that all children who use any form of communication feel included and comfortable when they visit public playgrounds, and is one of many actions that can move all of our parks towards accessibility for all Marylanders with disabilities.

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