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Ways and Means Committee
Early Childhood Subcommittee
Education Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 23, 2022

HB749 –Natural Resources – Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program – Establishment - FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Barve and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

I am writing to request your consideration of HB 749 which established a Maryland Park Explorers Pilot Program in Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, and Calvert County.

PRIOR to COVID the American child spends an estimated 4 to 7 minutes a day outdoors and over 7 hours a day inside interacting with electronics and sitting in front of a screen. HB 749 will encourage children to engage in outdoor play and exploration, helping to fight childhood obesity by building physically healthier children while expanding their knowledge of the environment and promoting social and behavioral health.

While the benefits of environmental education are well-documented for both the health of the child and the health of the environment, much of our exposure is inequitable. This bill requires that these programs prioritize children in areas that lack green space and equitable access to outdoor environmental experiences and collect demographic data about their participants.

Maryland has already shown interest in promoting environmental education through similar programs in effect under the Department of Natural Resources such as the *Maryland Partnership for Children In Nature*, but Bill 749 would extend our reach to county parks and to underserved communities with little access to green space.

I thank you for your attention to this matter and request a favorable report on HB749 to establish of County Park Explorer Pilot Programs to teach youth participants the importance of the environment and encourage children to spend greater time exploring and learning in our natural surroundings.

Thank you,

Delegate Michele Guyton

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Delegate Michele Guyton".