

MICHELE GUYTON
Legislative District 42B
Baltimore County

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

March 30, 2022

HB749 - Favorable

Dear Chair Pinsky and Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I writing here to request your consideration of HB 749 which established a Maryland Park Explorers Pilot Program in Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties.

According to the Sierra Club, 28 million children do not live within 10 miles of green recreational space! PRIOR to COVID the American child spends an estimated less than 10 mins minutes a day outdoors and an average of 7-8 hours a day inside interacting with electronics and sitting in front of a screen. (BEFORE virtual schooling). The evidence of negative mental, behavioral, social and physical health effects of this time in front of screens has been well- documented. Recent analyses indicate that the problems are not just associated with screen time, but may actually also be associated with what kids are NOT doing. Going outside. HB 749 will encourage children to engage in outdoor play and exploration, and 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.

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

Sincerely,

Delegate Michele Guyton, District 42B

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