



**Testimony in Support of HB 358**  
**Prince George's County – Workgroup on Health and Wellness**  
**House Health and Government Operations Committee**  
**January 31, 2024**

KABOOM! is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to end playspace inequity across the country. We aim to accomplish this goal by partnering with a variety of systems that share our commitment to identifying and eliminating the racially based policy and funding barriers that created the inequities we seek to address. Since 1996, we have created over 17,000 playspaces and ensured over 12 million children have access to quality playspaces. Because the location and quality of playspace infrastructure was determined by the location and availability of housing opportunities, past policies like redlining, restrictive housing covenants, and school segregation have created a legacy of inequity that continues to deprive Black children the same access to quality play equipment that their white counterparts enjoy.

This is why KABOOM! has partnered with Baltimore City Schools, the Baltimore City Recreation and Parks Department, and Prince George's County/Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) to address playground inaccessibility in those communities through a data-driven, racially equitable plan. To date, KABOOM! has built over 60 community co-designed playspaces in Maryland with these and other partners. Furthering this effort also involves helping communities address wellness issues more holistically. The benefits of play children experience can only be fully achieved when their nutritional and other wellness needs are being met.

For these reasons, KABOOM! supports passage of HB 358, which would create a multi-sector Workgroup on Health and Wellness in Prince George's County. Addressing children's health and wellness needs through a series of interventions in the areas of food access, community health access, school nutritional support, mental health services, and physical activity can have a compounding positive impact when they are conducted in a coordinated manner. The Workgroup will ensure that the appropriate level of issue identification and coordination can take place.

KABOOM! is committed to this kind of cross sector approach for the promotion of community wellness. Last year, KABOOM! participated in the roll-out of President Biden's National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition and Health, which identified five-pillars of action: 1) Improve Food Access and Affordability, 2) Integrate Nutrition and Health. 3) Empower all Consumers to Make and Have Access to Healthy Choices, 4) Support Physical Activity for All, and 5) Enhance Nutrition and Food Security Research to helping underserved populations lead healthier lives. The representatives on this



Workgroup mirror these priorities and will allow Prince George's County to leverage any federal funding or resources which may result from the implementation of this national effort.

KABOOM! hopes that more communities will adopt this kind of strategic, long-term, and community driven approach as they work to address the social determinants of health that are preventing too many Black, low-income, and vulnerable children and families from leading full, healthy lives. We urge the legislature to quickly pass this legislation and hope Governor Moore will soon sign it into law. KABOOM! is ready to assist leaders in Prince George's County with the Workgroup's implementation in any manner that makes sense and aligns with the work we are doing with M-NCPPC and Prince George's County Department of Parks and Recreation as part of our 25 in 5 Initiative to End Playspace Inequity.