



Howard County Local Bills Hearing Testimony
Creation of a State Debt – Howard County – Centennial Park

To: Howard County Delegation

From: A. Raul Delerme, Director of Recreation and Parks

Date: November 17, 2020

The Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks **SUPPORTS** nomination of this project by the Howard County Delegation.

The Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks is requesting your support for a \$500,000.00 Bond Bill Grant for the design, construction, renovation, and equipping of the parking lots, pathways, and ancillary structures serving the South and West Areas of Centennial Park.

Centennial Park has long been the flagship park of Howard County's public park system and has remained a leisure destination in central Maryland for several decades, but it is beginning to show its age. The parking lots and pathways serving the Centennial Park – South Area, accessible from Clarksville Pike, and the Centennial Park – West Area, accessible from Centennial Lane, were designed and developed in the 1980's prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act becoming law in 1990. Over the past thirty years ADA retrofits and programming modifications have been made to meet the requirements of the law, but those modifications do not negate the fact that the parking and pathways for these areas of the park still require an overhaul to sufficiently increase, improve, and preserve public access and safety within the park based on public demand. Parking and pathway improvements will also become compliant with stormwater and pathway design specifications that have been established since the initial development of these facilities.

Upon initial consideration it is understood that requests for funding towards improvements to a parking lot or pathway system may not have the same appeal as funding a new playground or athletics facility, but they are actually far more important. Howard County's Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plans have repeatedly shown that the public primarily uses the park system to enjoy its trails and natural areas, not its playgrounds and athletic facilities. When the playgrounds, athletic fields and courts were closed in Spring 2020 due to COVID-19 the public still flocked to Centennial Park as a refuge to rejuvenate and preserve their physical, mental, and emotional well-being during these times of change, uncertainty, and isolation. We therefore believe the public would support public funding for improved public access, including further ADA improvements, to where the public clearly wants to be, which is Centennial Park.

Howard County is prepared to match this grant through matching funds in the Department of Recreation and Parks' proposed FY2022 Capital Budget.

Accordingly, the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks respectfully requests the Howard County Delegation nominate this Bond Bill initiative request for inclusion in the 2021 Regular Session of the Maryland General Assembly.