



Howard County Local Bills Hearing Testimony
Creation of a State Debt – Howard County – Robinson Nature Center Amphitheater

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 \$100,000.00 Bond Bill Grant for the design, construction, and equipping of an amphitheater at the Robinson Nature Center to provide outdoor educational and entertainment programming.

The Robinson Nature Center opened in 2011 and has since received much recognition for its LEED Certified Platinum designation and hundreds of program offerings every year. The mission of the Robinson Nature Center remains *to facilitate the enjoyment and understanding of our natural resources and to bridge the gap between people and nature. By inspiring sound environmental awareness, we promote responsible stewardship of all of our natural resources and strive to connect people of all ages with nature through experienced-based education.*

During the 2000's the Robinson Nature Center Capital Project enjoyed continued State support through Bond Bill Grants and other funding opportunities that enabled the near completion of the project's site development plan. One item that was abandoned due to funding challenges arising in the late 2000's was the construction of a proposed outdoor amphitheater. In response to the COVID-19 crisis childcare programs were developed at the Robinson Nature Center for the children of first responders and essential business employees. It was at that time that Department of Recreation and Parks staff realized what a great asset an outdoor amphitheater would have been for achieving the facility's mission to connect people of all ages with nature, especially during a period of restricted indoor gatherings and activities. The Department of Recreation and Parks now has a renewed interest in developing this outdoor facility to enable the expansion and adaptation of the offerings and opportunities at the Robinson Nature Center for experienced-based educational and entertainment programming in an outdoor setting. The best place to connect people with nature is in nature and this amphitheater will be the outdoor classroom where this connection is made.

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.