



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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Howard County Local Bills Hearing Testimony

Creation of a State Debt – Howard County – Harriet Tubman Center (Ho.Co. 26-21)

To: Howard County Delegation

From: Mark Stromdahl, Chief, Bureau of Facilities

Date: November 17, 2020

The Howard County Department of Public Works **SUPPORTS** nomination of this project by the Howard County Delegation.

Many residents in Howard County have felt a longstanding need for a Center dedicated to Harriet Tubman and the history of African American culture in Howard County. This desire is being realized at the former Harriet Tubman High School, originally constructed in 1948.

The project scope includes exhibit space, reading/ recording rooms, a restored classroom, and assembly areas for large gatherings. Managed by Recreation & Parks, it will serve the public seven days a week and include a Children's Play area/ exterior playground, youth game rooms, and aerobics and cooking classes.

With the assistance of previously granted bond funds, the building was recently upgraded to meet current Life Safety Code and ADA guidelines. These bond funds were also used to remediate lead paint and asbestos from the building. Upgrades to utilities serving the building and to heating and cooling systems are in process. The requested Bond funds will be used to renovate building space and build the playground mentioned above.

The Ball Administration understands that all residents should be able to be able to live, work, and thrive in Howard County. Support for the Harriet Tubman Center will recognize the important contributions of African Americans to Howard County's progress, while also serving as a key public space for all residents to contribute to Howard County's diversity and connect with their neighbors. The Cultural Center will also be a learning environment for future generations of Howard County's students. These young people will be able to use experiences created at the Center as a foundation for building a better Howard County for all.

For these reasons, the Department of Public Works supports approval of this bond initiative.