

March 1, 2022

Honorable Joanne C. Benson, Chair
Prince George's County Senate Delegation
James Senate Office Building – Room 214
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Honorable Nick Charles, Chair
Prince George's County House Delegation
Lowe House Office Building – Room 207E
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: **HB 1057/PG 406-22 – Prince George's County - Recreation Authority**

Dear Senator Benson and Delegate Charles:

I write on behalf of the Prince George's County Council to request that the above proposed legislation be held to allow for additional community and stakeholder review prior to moving forward. The Prince George's County's Senate and House consideration of this bill, in the short-period since proposed, has garnered numerous questions and concerns about its origins and potential impact on the County government, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and the provision of recreational services to our county residents.

As you are aware, the bill was late-filed, made available to the public on Sunday February 6th, heard during the House Delegation's Monday February 7th public hearing, considered in the County Affairs subcommittee on Wednesday February 9th and approved by the full House Delegation, with amendments, on Friday February 11th. The bill received barely a week for consideration and review by the public and other stakeholders. As amended by the House Delegation, this now emergency bill, attempts to do several things:

- Gives the County governing body (the Executive and County Council) the authority to create a Prince George's County Recreation Authority to “oversee youth sports and recreation functions in the County”
- Establishes a 10-member Prince George's County Recreation Authority Blue Ribbon Work Group to study and, prior to the establishment of a County Recreation Authority, make certain recommendations on how the Authority would operate and be funded to the County Council and Delegation by December 1, 2022
- State the intent of the General Assembly that any impacted employees of M-NCPPC shall retain the status of their current employment if they are transferred to a new Recreation Authority

It is clear to the County Council that the legislation contemplates a substantial change to how the County currently provides recreational services and opportunities for a wide range of populations. As such we believe some additional information and discussion is needed in the County prior to any actions taken by the General Assembly on the proposed bill.

These include the following fundamental questions:

- Is it necessary to authorize the establishment of the new Recreation Authority in the bill before the actual study and recommendations are completed?
- According to the County Executive’s February 7th testimony, the proposed Authority would be headed by an Executive Director and governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the County Executive and approved by the County Council? As such, it would apparently resemble the organizational structure of the County’s Revenue and Redevelopment Authorities, respectively. Why is this the preferred structure?
- Why not an Executive Branch agency, similar to structures in Montgomery, Howard, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore Counties, where the respective recreation departments are County government agencies?
- What is the cost-benefit analysis of removing and/or changing current recreational operations and services, including community and other centers, facilities and programs maintained and provided by M-NCPPC?

While the County Council is not opposed to a public Work Group process, such as the one contemplated by the bill, we believe additional information and public discussion is necessary before committing to a particular structure. Thank you in advance for your consideration of these comments and the Council looks forward to working with you, the Delegation and our community on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Calvin S. Hawkins, II
County Council Chair

cc: Hon. Bill Ferguson, Senate President
Hon. Adriene A. Jones, Speaker, House of Delegates
Members, Prince George’s Senate Delegation
Members, Prince George’s House Delegation
Hon. Kumar P. Barve, Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Council Members, Prince George’s County Council
Hon. Angela D. Alsobrooks, County Executive
Ms. Elizabeth M. Hewlett, Chair, Prince George’s Planning Board
Mr. Ron Young, State Legislative Affairs Director
Mr. Ken Battle, Committee Director, General Assembly Committee