



*Wes Moore, Governor*  
*Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor*  
*Josh Kurtz, Secretary*  
*David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary*

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## MEMORANDUM

To: Local Governing Bodies

From: Land Acquisition and Planning (LAP) Unit, Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Date: October 2024 (contacts updated January 2025)

Re: State and Local Parks – Play Area Accessibility – Recreation Communication Boards Pilot Program  
2024 Regular Session – House Bill 420/Chapter 568 – Effective July 1, 2024

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information to local governing bodies regarding the Recreation Communication Boards Pilot Program.

### Background:

On May 9, 2024, the Governor of Maryland signed [HB 420](#) (Chapter 568) into law creating a pilot program for the purchase and installation of communication boards in public play areas at State and local parks. The law can be found in Natural Resources Article §5-2B. The communication board is intended to improve play area accessibility by displaying photos, symbols, or illustrations to enable individuals with limited language skills to communicate. The pilot program is effective from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2028, for a period of four (4) years, and is subject to funding availability.

### Definitions in the Law Include:

“Communication board” means a device that displays photos, symbols, or illustrations with words and braille to supplement or replace spoken language as a means of expression and communication.

“Play area” means a portion of a site containing play components designed and constructed for children.

“Local governing body” means the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and the governing body of any county or Baltimore City. (Note that this definition does not include municipal governments.)

“Alteration” means a change to an existing play area that affects the usability of the play area. “Alteration” does not include normal maintenance to an existing play area that does not affect the usability of the play area.

### Summary of the Law:

Subject to the availability of funding, for play areas located within a public park or recreation area under the jurisdiction of the Department or a local governing body, Natural Resources Article §5-2B-02(B) requires (1) DNR to construct a communication board in each newly constructed play area under its jurisdiction, and (2) each local governing body responsible for the construction of play areas that receives a grant from the pilot program

to construct at least one communication board in each newly constructed play area under its jurisdiction. DNR and each local governing body may construct a communication board in an existing play area under its jurisdiction when making alterations to that play area. DNR is required to submit a report each year of the pilot program to the General Assembly that provides an evaluation of the pilot program.

#### Funding Availability:

Total funding for this program is \$100,000. Grants will be made available to eligible applicants for eligible projects until the funds are exhausted. Each grant under the program may not exceed \$3,000 for each communication board that is purchased and installed.

#### Implementation of the Law:

Attached to this memo is a grant application for the purchase and installation of a communication board. Grant priority will be given to communication boards installed in newly constructed play areas.

#### Administrative Process:

- Application – Applicant will submit individual project applications to LAP. The application package must include the necessary supporting documents listed on the Accompanying Document Checklist: area map; site plan; deed/sdat, easement, lease or Joint Use Agreement; photo of project area; and visual specification or design of sign, if available.
- Acknowledgement Letter – LAP will send an acknowledgement to establish the project start date pending Board of Public Works (BPW) approval.
- BPW Approval – All projects under this program require BPW approval. Applications submitted do not bind the state to reimburse the applicant for expenditures incurred on the project until after BPW approval. LAP will schedule projects under this program for BPW meetings on a quarterly basis.
- Approval Notification – LAP will notify the applicant once BPW has approved the project.
- Reimbursement – Grant funds are available on a reimbursement basis after BPW approval and project completion. Grant recipient may submit one reimbursement request via the attached Request for Final Reimbursement form at the completion of each awarded project. The request must include the requisite backup documentation listed on the form and photos of the completed project (installed communication board).

#### **Attachments:**

Play Area Accessibility – Recreation Communication Boards Grant Application and Project Agreement  
Play Area Accessibility – Recreation Communication Boards Grant Request for Final Reimbursement

For questions, please contact your Local Grants Administrator:

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