

Chapter 470

(House Bill 749)

AN ACT concerning

Natural Resources – Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program – Establishment

FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program in the Department of Natural Resources for the purpose of providing certain counties with funds to establish local Park Explorers Pilot Programs; requiring a local Park Explorers Pilot Program to include certain programming and messaging; and generally relating to the Maryland Park Explorers Grant Pilot Program.

BY adding to

Article – Natural Resources
Section 5–1012
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2018 Replacement Volume and 2021 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Natural Resources

5–1012.

(A) THERE IS A MARYLAND PARK EXPLORERS GRANT PILOT PROGRAM IN THE DEPARTMENT.

(B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PILOT PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, COUNTY AND BALTIMORE COUNTY, AND CALVERT COUNTY WITH EQUAL FUNDS TO ESTABLISH LOCAL PARK EXPLORERS PILOT PROGRAMS.

(C) A LOCAL PARK EXPLORERS PILOT PROGRAM SHALL:

(1) TARGET YOUTH POPULATIONS WITH MINIMAL ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE IN AN EFFORT TO BRIDGE SOCIOECONOMIC AND RESOURCE GAPS THROUGH FREE, ACCESSIBLE, AND CONVENIENTLY LOCATED PROGRAMMING;

(2) PROMOTE THE POSITIVE IMPACTS THAT SPENDING TIME OUTDOORS HAS ON LONG–TERM DEVELOPMENTAL AND SOCIAL WELL–BEING;

(3) PROVIDE CONSERVATION-RELATED MESSAGING, INCLUDING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES, TO FURTHER PARTICIPANT UNDERSTANDING OF THE BENEFITS OF GREEN SPACE AND ITS DIRECT IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATERSHEDS; AND

(4) INCORPORATE LOCAL HISTORY AND CULTURAL IMPACTS IN ITS MESSAGING TO HIGHLIGHT THE DIVERSE CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CURRENT SOCIAL EVENTS AND DEVELOPED HISTORIES.

(D) (1) ON OR BEFORE OCTOBER 1, 2023, AND EACH OCTOBER 1 THEREAFTER, EACH PARTICIPATING COUNTY SHALL SUBMIT TO THE DEPARTMENT A REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOCAL PARK EXPLORER'S PILOT PROGRAM, INCLUDING:

(I) THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS;

(II) THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM POPULATIONS WITH MINIMAL ACCESS TO GREEN SPACE; AND

(III) THE RESULTS OF PARTICIPANT SURVEYS, INCLUDING FEEDBACK ON WHETHER THE PARTICIPANT HAD A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE IN THE PARK EXPLORER'S PILOT PROGRAM.

(2) A COUNTY SHALL REPORT THE INFORMATION REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IN THE AGGREGATE AND DISAGGREGATED BY:

(I) HISPANIC OR LATINO OF ANY RACE;

(II) FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE NON-HISPANIC OR NON-LATINO ONLY:

1. AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKA NATIVE;

2. ASIAN;

3. BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN;

4. NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER;

5. WHITE; OR

6. TWO OR MORE RACES; AND

(III) INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY.

(E) (1) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2024, AND EACH DECEMBER 1 THEREAFTER, THE DEPARTMENT, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MARYLAND RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION, SHALL SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MARYLAND PARK EXPLORERS GRANT PILOT PROGRAM.

(2) THE REPORT SHALL INCLUDE:

(I) A RECOMMENDATION ON WHETHER THE PILOT PROGRAM SHOULD:

- 1. CONTINUE; AND**
- 2. BE EXPANDED STATEWIDE; AND**

(II) INFORMATION REGARDING WHETHER ANY OTHER COUNTY HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN PARTICIPATING IN THE PILOT PROGRAM.

(F) FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024, 2025, AND 2026, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF ~~\$150,000~~ \$100,000 FOR THE MARYLAND PARK EXPLORERS GRANT PILOT PROGRAM.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2022. It shall remain effective for a period of 4 years and, at the end of June 30, 2026, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved by the Governor, May 16, 2022.