



February 12, 2025

Hon. William Folden
Maryland State Senate
414 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St. Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Folden,

I am writing in support of your Our Kids Play Safe and Playground Safety Act of 2025 (S.B. 95). My name is Kathryn Lusk, and I am the Vice President for Field Operations for KABOOM!. KABOOM! is a national nonprofit based in Bethesda working to ensure that all kids have access to great places to play. I have worked for KABOOM! for 16 years and am a certified Playground Safety Inspector by the National Recreation and Parks Association. While KABOOM! works across the country, I have worked with school and park partners in Baltimore since 2015 and park partners in Prince George's County since 2022.

As a nonprofit focused on safe play for kids, we believe that this effort to codify state requirements for safety and require regular inspections will contribute to better maintenance and increase kids' access to playgrounds that are fun, engaging, and protect them from harm.

Currently, playground installation and maintenance safety standards are determined by individual local governments. Additionally, these guidelines are applied inconsistently with varying degrees of enforcement. State legislation that clarifies the requirements for the construction and maintenance of safe public playspaces will ensure consistency across Maryland's different jurisdictions and enhance the level of safety in our children's play. The bill's proposed new standards for newly built playspaces conforms to existing guidelines published by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and American National Standards Institute. These guidelines are considered the gold-standard in our industry and are already employed by many different parks and recreation departments across the state. The national standards these organizations circulate are developed by third party experts, who base their recommendations on injury reports and other data. Since many jurisdictions already use these standards there is almost no risk of this bill becoming an additional burden or unfunded mandate on our local government partners.

Playspaces also require care and attention through a regular maintenance program to keep users safe while they play. By requiring regular inspections and evaluations for compliance with our industry's voluntary safety standards, this legislation will enable better documentation of accidents and faulty equipment. That documentation will help jurisdictions address hazards that are known to playground operators and ensure their rapid repair. This not only reduces the likelihood of injury—and the costs associated with any litigation associated with those injuries—but also can save municipalities other expenses. An effective maintenance program is more cost effective in the long term than allowing equipment to fall into disrepair and require full replacement. Full replacement of playgrounds can cost half a million dollars or more depending on the size of the playground. That kind of one-time capital expenditure, multiplied over several playgrounds can end up

costing more than a local jurisdiction can afford if they had just employed a regular maintenance schedule.

Thank you again for sponsoring this critically needed legislation and if there is anything we can do to support these efforts please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathryn Lusk', written in a cursive style.

Kathryn Lusk
VP for Field Operations