



Howard County Local Bills Hearing Testimony
Creation of a State Debt – Howard County – Patapsco Female Institute Chapel

To: Howard County Delegation

From: A. Raul Delerme, Director of Recreation and Parks

Date: November 17, 2020

The Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks **SUPPORTS** nomination of this project by the Howard County Delegation.

The Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks is requesting your support for a \$300,000.00 Bond Bill Grant for the design, construction, renovation, improvement, reuse, and equipping of the Patapsco Female Institute Chapel to provide for improved access, use, and enjoyment of the historic site.

The Patapsco Female Institute was founded in 1837 as a school for young women at a time when higher education in the sciences and math were not commonly offered to girls. The building and surrounding property continued to operate as a school for many years before subsequently transitioning to other uses until being abandoned and falling into disrepair. Howard County later acquired the property in order to stabilize and preserve the ruins of this recognizable Greek revival structure. The Department of Recreation and Parks has been able to utilize the property, at its current level of restoration and renovation, for weddings, plays, and a variety of programming offerings. Unfortunately, the current lack of public utility connections as well as the absence of any enclosed improved spaces have prevented the County from optimizing the public's use and enjoyment of Patapsco Female Institute Historic Park.

The Department of Recreation and Parks desires grant funding to support the development of public water and sewer connections for the site, the creation of ADA-compliant access within the historic ruins, and the renovation of the Patapsco Female Institute chapel into restrooms, meeting space, offices, a storage and display space for site-specific historic artifacts, and the construction of an improved open-air stage. There is currently no location within the park that qualifies as a shelter-in-place site in the event of severe weather or an emergency. Site limitations restrict the amount of parking on the property, so most programmed use of the park requires visitors to be dropped off at the site. Park patrons young and old have no choice but to evacuate the site by shuttle or on foot every time the weather takes a turn for the worst. A State Bond Bill Grant will expedite the County's completion of improvements to this site that will significantly enhance visitor safety, access, use, and enjoyment of the Patapsco Female Institute chapel and Historic Park.

Howard County is prepared to match this grant through matching funds in the Department of Recreation and Parks' proposed FY2022 Capital Budget.

Accordingly, the Howard County Department of Recreation and Parks respectfully requests the Howard County Delegation nominate this Bond Bill initiative request for inclusion in the 2021 Regular Session of the Maryland General Assembly.