



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 20
MONTGOMERY COUNTY

February 3, 2017

Isiah Leggett, County Executive
Montgomery County
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Leggett,

Greetings. We are writing to express our support for a County feasibility study evaluating a potential aquatic center on the campus of Washington Adventist Hospital. The District 20 Delegation believes the aquatic center will provide much needed community and therapeutic services and we strongly support the project.

Last fall, the Takoma Park City Council, Presidents of Adventist Health Care/Washington Adventist and Washington Adventist University and Provost of Montgomery College sent you a letter requesting that the County evaluate construction of an aquatics center on the Takoma Park campus of the Washington Adventist Hospital. We support the interested parties as they come together to recognize and advocate for a common need, one that would benefit local children, students, seniors, patients, persons with special needs, and the general community in the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring area.

With the ongoing discussions about the future of the Piney Branch Elementary School pool and the need to make room for additional classroom space, the closing Washington Adventist University's pool, and the impending closure of Montgomery College's pool in Falcon Hall, we believe that the timing of Washington Adventist Hospital's relocation to White Oak, which will occur within the next few years, presents a real opportunity for County decision-makers to take action to meet the needs of a large and diverse population that is often underserved.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), approximately 10 people drown every day and more than one in five of the drowning victims are under the age of 14. Knowing the basics of water safety and how to swim are invaluable skills and, unfortunately, ones that too many minority and low-income children lack. The CDC finds that African-American children between the ages 5 and 14 are three times more likely to drown than white children. One of the

factors the CDC points to for this **disparity is the lack of access to swimming pools**. The USA Swimming Foundation reports that 70% of African-American children and 60% of Latino children cannot swim. For the young people who live in the Takoma Park/East Silver Spring community, especially young children of color and low-income residents, having a place close to where they live to learn water safety helps our community address disparities and provides important life skills to our young people.

We are aware that the County Capital Improvement Plan has funds for an aquatics center in another part of Silver Spring. However, we believe that it makes sense to explore the feasibility of a complimentary facility in Takoma Park that meets the diverse needs of the community and provides some of the health-related and therapeutic services that will leave the area along with the main hospital, or that have never been provided in this part of the County to begin with.

In short, we support the City and their partners in their desire and effort to work with the County to evaluate the space needs and potential cost estimates for constructing an aquatics facility on the Washington Adventist Hospital campus. We look forward to working with you, the City and its partners to make this exciting opportunity a reality.

Sincerely,



Senator Will C. Smith, District 20



Delegate Sheila Hixson, District 20



Delegate David Moon, District 20



Delegate Jheanelle Wilkins, District 20

cc:

Takoma Park City Council

Gabriel Albornoz, Director, Montgomery County Department of Recreation

Bonnie Kirkland, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Montgomery County

John Kenney, Chief, Montgomery County Department of Aging and Disability Services

Reemberto Rodriguez, Director, Silver Spring Regional Center

Montgomery County Council

Montgomery County Board of Education

Peter Fosselman, White Oak Planning Coordinator