

October 12, 2012

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Dear Senators,

The Philadelphia Parks Alliance and its almost 10,000 members and supporters are deeply concerned about the implications of House Bill 2224 which amends the Dedicated and Donated Property Act. We feel strongly that public parks must be protected from sale by cash-strapped local governments and urge you to vote NO on HB 2224.

We appreciate the PA Senate's efforts to amend this legislation, but both amended versions of House Bill 2224 fail to address our central concerns about this bill. The amended version of House Bill 2224 still removes the protections we need to preserve precious parkland. A public hearing is not a substitute for the court oversight that was provided in the Dedicated and Donated Property Act or for the public oversight that a referendum on the sale of parkland would provide.

If you vote to approve the current amended version of HB 2224, hundreds of acres of parkland that were acquired by condemnation or donated at a reduced rate would be at risk for sale by cash-strapped local governments. This includes huge tracts of Fairmount Park in Philadelphia which receives as many visitors annually as the National Mall in Washington, DC.

If it is necessary to amend rules that govern the sale of municipal land, we urge you work with conservation groups during the next legislative session and draft a new bill that fully protects parkland. In the Philadelphia Parks Alliance's 29 years of park and recreation education and advocacy, we have seen that parks are essential to safe neighborhoods, sustainable communities, a vibrant state and a growing tax base. The protection of parkland is too critical of an issue to rush through the final legislative sessions before an important election.

In a recent Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper poll, 96% of respondents said that they did not support HB 2224, mainly because the changes would have unintended consequences that are damaging to parks. Enclosed are several newspaper editorials, columns and articles--all expressing deep concern about the impact of this legislation. Please take our constituents concerns and these articles into consideration and vote NO on House Bill 2224.

Sincerely,

Lauren Bornfriend, Executive Director



Robert P. Thomas, Board President

