

My name is Kristin Link, I am the grandmother of a 4-year-old boy with Cerebral Palsy who uses a walker and an adaptive stroller for mobility. Our family has become painfully aware of the ways in which typical playgrounds exclude those with disabilities. Montgomery County's website lists several parks that state that they are fully accessible according to ADA standards set in 2010. However, ADA compliance in no way assures usability or true inclusivity. Paved paths all too often lead to wood chips or mulch that is impossible for walker/wheelchair users to navigate. The exertion it takes for our grandson to make it across wood chips to the playground leaves him with little energy left. Even if he or others with mobility issues make it to the play equipment, it is not designed to be inclusive. Standard playgrounds segregate and isolate children based on ability. I have witnessed firsthand the disappointment that results when a child is regulated to the sidelines, separate and apart. Montgomery County Parks need the funding to modernize and maintain our area parks for all people regardless of ability. My hope is that Montgomery County will see the benefit to all families and children with and without disabilities and will choose to be a leader on inclusivity and set an example for all of Maryland by creating play spaces welcoming to all.