

CHAPTER 401

(House Bill 1311)

AN ACT concerning

State Designations – Walking as the State Exercise

FOR the purpose of designating walking as the State exercise.

BY adding to

Article – State Government

Section 13–320

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2004 Replacement Volume and 2007 Supplement)

Preamble

WHEREAS, Heart disease is the number one cause of death each year in Maryland, and thousands of Maryland citizens suffer from disease and other health problems as a result of a lack of physical activity; and

WHEREAS, Mortality rates from coronary artery disease in Maryland rank in the top one–third in the nation with more than 12,000 people dying annually; and

WHEREAS, Physical inactivity and unhealthy eating are leading risk factors that contribute to at least 400,000 preventable deaths each year in the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, approximately 23% of Americans and 31% of Marylanders engaged in no leisure time physical activity; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, the obesity rate in Maryland was greater than 23%; and

WHEREAS, Maryland ranks in the top 50% of the heaviest states in the nation, with an adult obesity rate of 23.4%; and

WHEREAS, In the United States, the number of adults and children who are overweight has risen sharply during the past 25 years, and the percentage of adults and children who made trips on foot dropped during that same period; and

WHEREAS, Health care costs related to cardiovascular disease in Maryland are \$2.25 billion yearly, and the annual cost of heaviness and obesity in the United States is \$122.9 billion with \$64.1 billion in direct costs and \$58.8 billion in indirect costs; and

WHEREAS, If all inactive Americans were to participate in physical activity, an estimated \$76.6 billion in direct health costs would be saved; and

WHEREAS, One in five children are overweight or at risk of being overweight, and encouraging children to walk more can establish more physically active and healthy lifestyles; and

WHEREAS, Suicide is the third leading cause of death among children and young people and the eighth leading cause of death overall, and physical activity reduces feeling of depression and anxiety; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Surgeon General recommends that all Americans walk at least 30 minutes per day, 5 days a week; and

WHEREAS, Walking is one of the best forms of exercise because it helps reduce cholesterol, improve cardiovascular fitness, improve blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart attack, and prevent colon cancer, breast cancer, osteoporosis, and diabetes; and

WHEREAS, More than 300,000 Maryland residents have diabetes, and an estimated one-third of the population remains undiagnosed, and walking 30 minutes a day cuts the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes by 58%; and

WHEREAS, Walking is ideally suited for rehabilitation after illness, surgery, or injury by strengthening the heart, lungs, and circulatory system; and

WHEREAS, The risk of injury while walking is less than with other forms of physical activity, and injuries incurred while walking are less severe than with many other exercises; and

WHEREAS, Walking is a fun activity that friends and family can do together; and

WHEREAS, Walking promotes informal interactions between people and strengthens community, and many neighborhoods lack any social contact between neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Walking is a natural activity that does not require any specialized equipment or training and is an inexpensive physical activity that most Maryland citizens can do easily, at any time during the day; and

WHEREAS, Walking is as close to a universal physical activity as there is and can be easily integrated into the daily routine of most Marylanders; and

WHEREAS, Most people in Maryland already walk every day and a person can engage in other activities while walking, such as meeting and greeting neighbors,

talking with friends and family, observing nature or the community, and running errands or shopping; and

WHEREAS, Environments that encourage walking help to promote tourism and commerce; and

WHEREAS, Increased walking is an important facet of livable and sustainable communities; and

WHEREAS, Walking is an environmentally friendly method of transportation, which helps to reduce reliance on automobiles while cutting traffic congestion and air pollution; and

WHEREAS, Walking as a symbol for Maryland will benefit individual citizens and Maryland as a whole; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – State Government

13-320.

WALKING IS THE STATE EXERCISE.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2008.

Approved by the Governor, May 13, 2008.