

# An Open Letter to City Council Supporting Funding for the Essential Services Parks & Rec Will Provide in Our Recovery from Covid 19

We are a coalition of parks groups, Recreation Advisory Councils and Out of School Time providers who support funding the essential services that Parks & Rec provides. We recognize the unprecedented budget challenge that Covid 19 has created but we are also troubled by a basic truth: the African American and low income communities that are disproportionately impacted by Covid 19 are also most impacted by budget cuts to programming at Rec Centers and lack of maintenance at neighborhood parks.

\*Now more than ever, we see how important it is that all Philadelphians have access to parks and open space. The stewardship of those spaces is an essential service that has not shut down.

\*Parks and Rec plays a key role in feeding the children of Philadelphia, especially during the summer months, serving 340,000 meals last year

\*Communities most affected by Covid 19 are also communities most affected by budget cuts to Parks & Rec

\*Parks, Rec Centers and Out of School Time providers are well positioned to scale up employment of low-wage workers in programming and stewardship jobs.

\*Out of School Time programs are key to solving the childcare challenges parents face, especially for jobs that can not be done remotely. PPR serves 2,400 students during the school year, the largest OST provider in Philadelphia, and 10,000 students through summer camps

\*After extended time staying at home, Rec Centers will be important safe places for youth to be active and engaged with others.

Parks & Rec Programming is Already Understaffed

\*Program staffing at Parks & Rec -- before any budget cuts -- is inadequate, inflexible and based on a plan that is 60 years old

\*14 PPR staff were assaulted last year

\*Over 100 Rec Centers and playgrounds have only one staff person on site the vast majority of the time

\*In the last five years, there has been no increase in program staff

\*Summer camp waitlists show a clear demand for PPR programs

\*Relying on a 60-year-old plan is furthering the racial inequity of that era rather than serving the needs of all of our neighborhoods

The current staffing levels are not safe for Rec Center users, mostly children, nor for PPR staff.

Our coalition is composed of long-time partners of Parks & Rec. We will do our utmost to extend Parks & Rec programs and stewardship activities in this time of crisis -- but cuts to PPR staff pose often insurmountable challenges to our partnerships and the countless volunteer hours that are essential to make Parks & Rec run.

### Coalition Sign On

Philadelphia Parks Alliance is seeking co-signers for this open letter to City Council. If you have any questions, please contact Alex Doty at (215) 326-9229 or [adoty@philaparks.org](mailto:adoty@philaparks.org).

\*Required

Organization Name:\*

Contact Person:\*

Contact Email:\*

Contact Phone:\*

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