

February 22, 2021



Dear Committee on Parks and Recreation:

As representatives of New York City's sports based youth development (SBYD) organizations, we are writing to express our full support for Council Member Rodriguez's bill to create a New York City Office of Sports & Recreation. Every day we see firsthand how sports improve the physical and emotional wellbeing of youth. Unfortunately, we also see barriers to access sports in low-income communities, which prevent many youth from being able to participate. We hold the belief that opportunities to experience sports and achieve their benefits are a fundamental right for all children and are in agreement with Council Member Rodriguez that a bill focused on making this a reality is vitally important.

The increasing privatization of youth sports and "pay-to-play" fees required by many entities have contributed to the income disparity that defines youth sports in this city. Although children are willing, many families are simply unable to afford the financial burden associated with organized youth sports and many low-income communities are unable to offer many opportunities to experience sports at all. According to a report by the Aspen Institute¹, about 70 percent of students from families that earn over \$100,000 plays sports, compared to 30 percent of students from families that earn below \$25,000. The impact of this puts many youth at an increased risk for poor health outcomes, including obesity and depression, and deprives them of experiences that would contribute to their overall healthy development.

The establishment of an Office of Sports & Recreation with the goal of expanding access to youth sports throughout the city would position New York as a leader in sports based youth development. Young people, no matter their income level, would be able to experience the fulfillment and sense of personal belonging that comes from sports, which in turn would

¹Aspen Institute, "State of Play: Trends and Developments", 2018.

contribute to their sense of personal and social responsibility. With recent findings suggesting that Sports Based Youth Development (SBYD) programs result in significantly greater social and emotional learning than non-sports youth development programs², it has become even more critical to ensure that all young people, regardless of background, have equal access to the life-changing aspects of sport and play.

We thank you for your consideration and urge you to support this bill on behalf of the many young New Yorkers who stand to benefit.

Sincerely,

Rachel Cytron, Executive Director, Row New York

Vivian Santora, President & CEO, PowerPlay

Wil Snape-Rodgers, Executive Director, Play Rugby

Richie Cerrud, Associate Executive Director, Urban Dove

Tim Wyant, Executive Director, Squash Education Alliance

Brendan Buckley, Executive Director, Beat the Streets

Paul Caccamo, Founder & CEO, Up2Us Sports

Ana Reyes, Founder & Executive Director, I Challenge Myself

Peter Westbrook, Founder & CEO, Peter Westbrook Foundation

Sharon Cohen, Founder & CEO, Figure Skating in Harlem

Daniel O'Gallagher, Executive Director, Yorkville Youth Athletic Association

² Laureus Sport for Good USA, "Sports-Based Youth Development: Hitting a Home Run in Social and Emotional Learning Outcomes" 2021



VAN CORTLANDT TITANS

Youth Football Program, Inc.

Ray McElroy, President; Victor Nicasio, Vice President; Mitch Gershonowitz, Secretary-Treasurer

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SPORTS DEPARTMENT BILL Int. 1959-2020

The Van Cortlandt Titans Youth Football Program, Inc. is a not-for-profit CBO that fields a youth tackle football team of 39 high school-aged children. The team competes in the New York City Youth Football League and were the 2019 Intermediate Division champions. We practice and play at Van Cortlandt Stadium in the Bronx. All the adult staff are volunteers.

The team players are mostly Dominican and African American teenagers from northern Manhattan and the western/central Bronx, many from financially struggling families. Our 9-month program engages these children in a wholesome, supportive, athletic venture, keeping them off the dangerous summer streets, as they work together to achieve a common goal. The organization makes a special point of supporting children in stressful situations, providing scholarships to those who can't pay the player fee, combatting obesity, and even offering academic tutoring and college preparation.

We look forward to the passage of this bill. We feel it can help our organization in many ways, such as:

- **Centralizing resources:** matching coaches who wish to volunteer with teams. This would allow us to start another team of younger players, which we have been unable to do due to lack of volunteer coaching staff.
- **Better coordination with the Parks department:** Getting permits for the football field for practice and games can be very frustrating, and a zero-sum game. Also, a football team requires a lot of equipment, and the Parks department does not offer equipment storage or even allow rental storage containers. This greatly increases the team's costs and inconveniences.
- **Extended hours:** An Office of Sports and Recreation could provide the necessary leverage to get lights installed at Van Cortlandt Stadium for evening use, thus providing more opportunities for children to engage in sports activities.
- **Sports education:** Guest coaches affiliated with the Office of Sports and Recreation can visit the team and provide training to our staff and student athletes, whether related to football or not.

Sincerely yours,

Mitch Gershonowitz, Secretary-Treasurer

**NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Establishment of an Office of Sports Development and Youth Performance
David Ludwig - Senior Directory of Community Programming, Asphalt Green**

Good afternoon Chair Koo and Members of the Council, and thank you for holding today's important hearing. I'm David Ludwig, Senior Director of Community Programs at Asphalt Green, and I am testifying today in strong support of Intro 1959.

Asphalt Green is a non-profit organization that runs competitive sports programs for over 1,000 youth athletes across the city, as well as providing instructive and introductory programs that reach tens of thousands of children each year. There is a great need in New York City for the proposed Mayor's Office of Sports Development and Youth Performance and Asphalt Green fully supports its creation. Sports have the power to change lives, and they bring people of all ages and backgrounds together in activities that build positive relationships, life skills, and healthy habits. At a time when so many people are in need of positive social interactions, the creation of this Office has the potential to make a significant impact on the lives of countless New Yorkers; especially our young people.

Asphalt Green is committed to increasing the profile and presence of sports and recreation throughout New York City; especially in some of its most underserved areas. As a stakeholder in this Office's endeavors, we pledge to join forces and collaborate to make NYC a healthier place for children through increasing access to the highest quality sports programming in the country. As an organization that works on both ends of the competitive spectrum – both giving children their first chance to swim or dribble a ball and coaching youth athletes to Olympic medals and collegiate scholarships, we are confident that the investment necessary to deliver on this Office's charter will repay itself many times over. By increasing quality of life and health, and raising our city's profile as a destination for excellence in sports, this Office will ensure New York City remains the greatest city on earth for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I also want to thank Council Member Rodriguez and his staff for championing this effort, and for offering Asphalt Green and other sports nonprofits the opportunity to collaborate on this legislation.



Int 1959-2020 to Establish Mayor's Office of Sports Recreation

Testimony from Mara Mazza, Communications Director
Kings County Tennis League
February 22, 2021

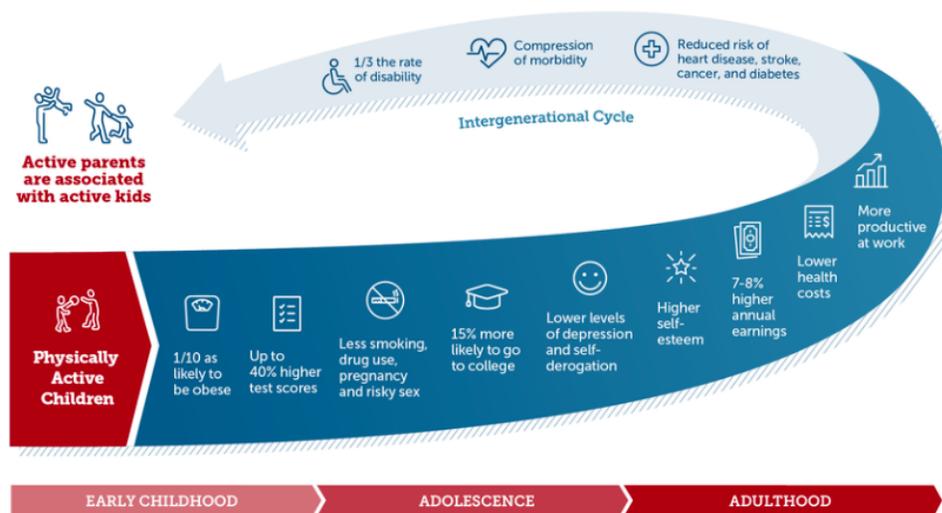
My name is Mara Mazza and I am the Communications Director at Kings County Tennis League (KCTL). Many thanks to Councilmember Rodriguez and Chairman Koo for considering this written testimony.

The loss of organized and unstructured play opportunities during the pandemic has stunted the ability of children to stay physically active and develop social connections that can help them manage mental health challenges during this stressful time.

As seen in [this exhibit](#), active kids simply do better in life.

ACTIVE KIDS DO BETTER IN LIFE

What Research Shows on the Lifetime Benefits



Learn more at aspen.org/sportsfacts

All children have a RIGHT to play. Social and emotional learning through sport is as important to development as classroom learning. [“According to research from the Aspen Institute and Utah State University, youth from low-income homes quit sports because of the financial costs at six times the rate of those from high-income homes. This statistic is particularly troubling as research shows physically active children are less likely to be](#)

[obese, report lower levels of depression, perform better academically, have reduced health risks as adults and become active parents with their own children. Investment in youth sports that serves all children is an upstream solution with long-term benefits.”](#)

A recent study shows that youth from low-income homes quit sports because of the financial costs at 6 times the rate of those from high-income homes. In Brooklyn, where we use tennis as tool for youth development for children living in and around NYCHA developments, there’s an urgent need to address the inequitable access to play and sports opportunities for underserved populations in NYC, especially in our Black and Brown communities.

Kids from lower-income homes and children of color in NYC confront formidable obstacles to youth sports. These barriers grow taller as our young people get older, and the stakes get higher. Access to play and youth sports is a racial justice issue. There are higher rates of disease and lower sports participation rates in Black and Brown communities, and these discrepancies can stunt future economic empowerment. New York needs more equitable youth sports programming that serves all children at scale. This is why a new sports and recreation office would be incomplete without an explicit focus on accessible sports programming to reach these communities.

Fields, courts and permits continue to be in high demand. The Brooklyn community districts that KCTL serves, Brooklyn 02 and 03, each around 3 square miles in area, are highly built environments, leaving only .17¹ and .04² square miles of these areas, respectively, open or recreational space. It is proven that people living within a mile of a park are four times more likely to use it than those who live farther away. Lack of available play spaces hinders equal access and opportunity to youth sports. Given that people living within a mile of a park are four times more likely to use it than those who live farther away, KCTL’s model of renovating play spaces in or near the housing developments and bringing tennis to where kids live is a resourceful solution.

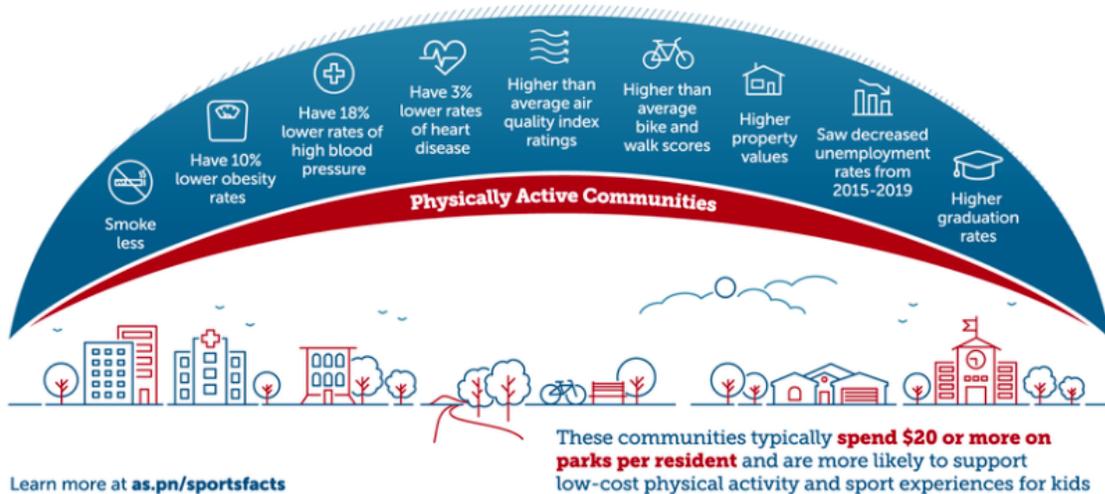
¹ [NYC Planning Community District 2 Profile](#)

² [NYC Planning Community District 3 Profile](#)

Communities also enjoy benefits when they promote policies and infrastructure that encourage healthy behavior. Below, the Aspen Institute's Project Play explored the impact that physically-active communities have on their residents, and the mechanism by which they promote physical activity, sport and recreation.

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES DO BETTER

What Research Shows on the Benefits to Residents



About Kings County Tennis League

KCTL provides free, year-round tennis programs to more than 200 children living in and around six NYCHA developments in Central Brooklyn that are implemented in a fun, community-based environment emphasizing hard work and goal-setting. We remove all the barriers to tennis programs by creating courts and renovating underused play spaces and then bring staff, volunteers, equipment and programs to where our students reside. More than 95% of our student players are children of color; 35% live in public housing.

Tennis is often perceived as a country club sport. We addressed this stereotype with our students' families because they felt tennis was not "their" sport. Ten years later, there is a thriving junior tennis community at each of our NYCHA program sites and each student is a proud member of it.

For the health and welfare of our children, more quality community-based play opportunities need to be made available at low-cost and close to where children live. As seen in our model, we can get creative with potential unused playspaces to meet this demand. Make this investment in local sports and recreation and youth sports, and help rebuild and strengthen our underserved NYC communities during this challenging time of post-COVID recovery.

I want to thank Tom Farrey and Emily Stets of the Aspen Institute for their content in this testimony.

On behalf of the KCTL staff, Board, volunteers and students, I thank you for your consideration.



Uptown Soccer, Inc
5030 Broadway, ste 652, NY, NY 10033
www.uptownsoccer.org

2/22/21

re. Int. 1959-2020, Creation of an Office of Sports Development and Youth Performance

Dear City Council Members,

I would like to advocate on behalf of the proposed Sports Department Bill. As a community based organization that serves low income, immigrant communities we have seen first hand the immense positive impact sports programs can have on our young people, but also the challenges in delivering high quality programs to them.

Our organization provides over 300 youth annually with free soccer programming, including in school and out of school training, summer camps, leagues and tournament play. We have seen significant measureable improvements in the health and fitness of our participants, and built significant social capital through the connections young people and their families are able to make at our programs. As we emerge from the pandemic, programs such as ours will be critical in providing safe spaces for young people to build up their health and fitness levels, gain the mental health benefits of exercise and enjoy the positive outcomes of being connected to a team and coaches that can support them.

As we know, the pandemic has laid bare the economic and health disparities in our city. These inequities stretch to the sports fields, gyms and courts as well. The creation of an Office of Sports Development and Youth Performance would serve as a significant tool in addressing these issues. The allocation of City resources to promote inclusive sports programming within schools, parks and with private sector partners could have a lasting impact on the youth of our city.

The right to play sports is a fundamental human right, that can lead to extraordinary outcomes, both on the field and within the individual lives of participants. The establishment of an office of Sports Development and Youth Performance would allow New York City to be a leader in shaping those outcomes and positively impacting the lives of young people city-wide.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Sykes
Executive Director, Uptown Soccer



**Testimony of Jenny Veloz,
On behalf of the Fair Play Coalition Regarding Intro 1959
Before NYC Council Committee on Parks and Recreation
Dated February 22, 2021**

Good afternoon, my name is Jenny Veloz, I am a community organizer at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and I am here on behalf of the Fair Play Coalition today. The Fair Play Coalition is a coalition of students, teachers, coaches, principals, parents, activists, and advocates standing together for all high school students in New York City public schools to have equitable access to the PSAL, and to all athletic fields and courts controlled by the DOE. While we applaud the intention of Intro 1959, Fair Play today opposes the bill which would create an independent department/agency for the broad concept of sports and recreation.

For the last four plus years, Fair Play has advocated for equity in publicly funded after school sports for public school students. We have engaged in legislative advocacy, and successfully passed a bill in this Council requiring the Department of Education to make public how it allocates its resources amongst schools when funding after school sports. We've engaged in outreach and community organizing. And we have sued the DOE to try to require it to fix the discriminatory manner in which it allocates after-school sports teams throughout the City. Why have we focused our energy on the DOE? It is because a primary agency already exists that provides publicly-funded sports and recreation opportunities to students across the City, and it is operated within the DOE: the Public School Athletic League ("PSAL"). The PSAL is well-established and has historically borne the responsibility of providing sports and recreation opportunities for students across the City. And while we continue to advocate to fix the PSAL's inequitable policies, we do not believe that creating an entirely new, separate, ambiguous office with a similar mission is the correct move, particularly in these times of fiscal restraint.

So, while we appreciate the concept of creating an office of sports recreation, we are concerned this new ambiguous entity will shift focus from the more pressing issue at hand, ensuring we work to bring back

FAIR | PLAY

already existing after school sports programs in an equitable manner. Intro 1959's stated goal that this new office will "work to provide access to sports-related opportunities for students and promote the role of sports in education and recreation" is duplicative, since the PSAL provides this same service to public high school students, albeit in an inequitable way.

We believe that instead of creating a new office, the City and Council's priority should be fixing the PSAL system. Fair Play continues to advocate on behalf of Black and Latinx students who, especially now with the suspension of sports due to COVID-19, have had to endure almost a year with no sports. Instead of what seems to be an almost redundant service, we should be focusing on solutions to improve the PSAL system and ensure equal access to all high school students in New York City.

It has been almost a year since after school sports were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mayor DeBlasio recently spoke about bringing back after school sports, prioritizing health and safety, but did not mention equity. For years, PSAL has denied access to sports to Black and Latinx students, while providing more resources to larger, more integrated schools. The Mayor and PSAL have the opportunity now to implement a plan for a safe return to sports, while also ensuring that resources are distributed equitably, giving access to all students, not just those who have the privilege of attending larger schools with an abundance of resources. New York City is last throughout New York State to bring back after school sports, placing our student-athletes at a disadvantage. However, we cannot return to the status quo. We need to make sure that sports are available to all of the city's students, no matter school size or demographic. We are hopeful that the PSAL will use this "pause" on sports as an opportunity to restructure the entire program with equity as a guiding principle.

However, access to sports goes beyond athletics, and there is also inequality regarding school athletic facilities. Schools lack the equipment, practice facilities and other resources to field a proper team. If Intro 1959 were to move forward, we would consider supporting an amended bill focused on coordination of access to parks, parks permits, and facilities to ensure equity. All schools, large and small, should be able to field a team or conduct practices utilizing proper facilities.

FAIR | PLAY

We look forward to continuing our advocacy with the Council, the administration, and our students' strong voices. Once again, thank you for your time.



I'm writing on behalf of the Sport for Good NYC Leadership Council (SfG LC) in support of the Amended Int. 1959-2020 bill to establish the Office of Sports Development and Youth Performance. We believe this office could play an important role in advancing sports for youth development.

The SfG LC is part of Laureus USA's Sport for Good cities strategy to increase access for young people to high quality sports-based youth development (SBYD) programs, improve coordination between youth sports stakeholders and other key decision makers, and increase the amount of funding, resources, and awareness for sports as a solution for social change.

The SfG LC is a collective of SBYD professionals - volunteers from a variety of community partners working in NYC to support the SBYD sector. **We represent over 40 sport for good organizations in NYC which serve nearly 1.5 million young people.**

We, as the S4G LC, believe that all young people in NYC should feel joy and agency, especially for black, indigenous, and people of color. Thus, we must empower individuals and organizations to harness the power of sport for good in New York City with the support, knowledge, resources, and network to ensure young people have equitable opportunities to experience sport, physical activity, and play spaces that support their growth and success.

We see first-hand the deep inequities that exist in sports-based opportunities for young people in NYC. We believe that equity is a competency to build, harness, and spread to as many individuals and organizations as possible, and the establishment of this office should be part of this work. Access to healthy sport, wellness, movement, play, and physical activity are powerful tools to combat inequities; they are necessary but not sufficient to achieve equity. It is tragic that racial, gender identity, ability, ethnic, and class inequities persist. SfG NYC Collective is committed to undoing these inequities by providing opportunities to build competency in individuals and organizations to drive systemic change. SfG NYC collective must not just promote, but demonstrate equitable practices and policies. **We strongly encourage this office to partner with us in addressing inequitable sports-based opportunities for young people.**

As a SfG NYC LC, we are a ready and willing partner to work with the Office as established, to promote the benefits of sports-based youth development, of using sports spaces intentionally, with a trauma-informed and positive youth development lens. **We believe in the power of sports and investing in youth. We also know the sector is severely under-funded and under-utilized.**

LES OLS Little League

213 Stanton Street, New York, NY 10002 (212) 673-0900, ext. 306 e-mail: olskidsparkle@yahoo.com
website: <http://www.olslittleleague.org>

February 20, 2021

Board of Directors

Tony Rivera
President

Yvette Rivera
Administration Director

Precila Negrón-Matías

Jose Nieves Jr.

Carmen Rodriguez

Mario Sanchez

Dily Felix

My name is Tony Rivera and I am the President of the LES-OLS Little League (LES-OLS LL), which is the oldest and largest little league on the Lower East Side. We are established over 60 years ago and have over 300 local community participants every year.

Each year our league offers a safe haven for kids during spring and summer and teaches them discipline and teamwork through baseball and softball.

We have a vested interested in ensuring that any changes to Parks Permitting process is done in a transparent manner and we want to focus the following concerns and priorities:

1. Priority of limited field permits should be targeted to well-established youth sports organizations that utilize these permits historically.
 - a. Our kids need continued access to organized recreational sports programming. Such programs and activities help youth learn teamwork, discipline, social skills and maintain a healthy lifestyle.
2. The requirement on AED certification should be more flexible during Covid times.
 - a. There is concern amongst Little League Organizations that the lack of flexibility to allow for online AED certifications or defer the requirement until in person training can be done safely (either outdoors or in smaller indoor class setting) will lead to Permits being delayed or withheld from youth organizations.
3. During Covid times there are necessary safety precautions that all permit holders will implement. But the Parks Department should be understanding and flexible on citations and permit revocation policies as youth organizations implement safety protocols.
 - a. We all know the challenges of implementing and policing safety precautions throughout all parts of society. This has been a challenge for mass transit riders, restaurants patrons, and even in Congressional hearings. Therefore, we are concerned that youth organizations will be penalized or have permits revoked for the non-compliance on the part of a few. We will certainly look to enforce these safety policies, but games are held in public parks with passerby's often stopping to catch some of the game and leagues have little impact on their safety behavior. Youth Leagues should be able to call on Park Enforcement to help with those non-complying individuals without risk of citations to their leagues.

We hope that the Permits process evaluation and any proposed changes will have robust input and community engagement from youth leagues like ours. Note, we were not notified by the Parks Department regarding this important Permits hearing but learned through other organizations.

Respectfully,

Tony Rivera

February 24, 2021

New York City Council
Attn: Committee on Parks and Recreation
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007



Subject: Written Testimony - Int. No. 1959-2020, Office of Sports Recreation

Dear Committee:

With more than 50 years of combined experience in building community through local youth sports programming, we, the leadership of LeagueApps, respectfully submit the following written testimony for Int. No. 1959-2020 and the historic creation of an Office of Sports Recreation for New York City.

LeagueApps, a born-and-bred New York City company, builds technology and community to support local sports organizations providing amazing life-building experiences for more than 10 million young people. Our company's broader vision is to lead the creation of an equitable youth sports culture that makes the world a better place for all.

We join Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez and youth sports organizations across New York City, particularly those serving low income communities through sports-based youth development (SBYD) programs, in supporting Int. No. 1959-2020 and the creation of an Office of Sports Recreation.

These SBYD programs and their dynamic leaders serve a vital need in urban areas to provide sports as a platform and experience to build positive healthy outcomes, including social emotional learning, pro-social relationship skills and better academic performance.

Prior to the pandemic, youth sports faced many challenges, including a fractured infrastructure, unequal accessibility and a lack of cooperation, that were impediments to advancing the thriving youth sports culture we at LeagueApps envisioned.

The COVID-19 pandemic also proved how important sport is for the physical and mental well-being and development of children and families. Last year's unprecedented COVID-19 forced pause in play stopped the entire youth sports industry, leaving it with an uncertain future amid the unsettling impact of the pandemic.

A [recent survey](#) from the Youth Sports Collaborative Network showed that the pandemic's impact on SBYDs, including those serving New York City youth, had a dramatic impact on young people's activities. The participating youth sports programs serving low-income communities reported that 84% of their 146,000+ registered youth have not regularly participated in their programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When combined with the [well-documented research](#) on the benefits to physically active youth - lower rates of health risks, obesity and depression, as examples - it is clear the role sports-related programs serve in building thriving and healthy communities.

This drastic drop in urban youth participation, along with the multitude of societal challenges 2020 brought to our country, validates two critical opportunities to ensure the industry survives and thrives beyond the pandemic: 1) the need for mission-driven organizations like LeagueApps to enact programs supporting SBYDs at the infrastructure level and 2) the creation of a governed framework for prioritizing equity in access to youth and local sports programs.

Advancing the LeagueApps mission through a belief that sports are a unifying force for good is embodied through the creation of [FundPlay](#). This program provides technology, training and support to ensure every child is able to play, no matter their circumstances. Through FundPlay grant recipient organizations, including those serving New York City such as South Bronx United, Harlem Lacrosse, Kings County Tennis League and America SCORES New York, LeagueApps has been able to impact more than 200,000 youth in underserved communities in just the past few years.

An Office of Sports Recreation would spearhead a unique collaborative model, alongside the Department of Education and other applicable City agencies, to establish a much-needed precedent for prioritizing equitable access to sports-related programs and facilities for students, such as New York City-based SBYDs.

Now is the time for New York City and its Office of Parks and Recreation to enact this vision by creating a healthy and safe future for every young person across its diverse communities. A dedicated Office of Sports Recreation is critical to providing a leadership framework and voice to ensure a thriving youth and local sports community to help further all City interests and economies.

It is an outcome cities around our country will undoubtedly emulate, further establishing New York City as a home for eliminating societal gaps through equality, innovation, community and service of others.

At LeagueApps, we'll continue to play our role in ensuring the youth and local sports industry builds a better culture. We thank Councilmember Rodriguez for being the consummate teammate for all New York City young people and their families by creating a path for New York City to lead the way.

The creation of an Office of Sports Recreation through Int. No. 1959-2020 will allow New York City to show us all how the power of equitable sport will bridge divides and build City communities we're all proud to call home.

Sincerely,

Brian Litvack
Co-founder and CEO, LeagueApps

Jeremy Goldberg
President, LeagueApps

Benita Fitzgerald Mosley
Head of Community & Impact, LeagueApps
President, FundPlay

Testimony to New York City Council

My name is Pauline Gambuto and I run Edso Sports, Inc., an adult softball league. I have been doing this for 29 years. I am a senior citizen and Edso is my livelihood.

Last year, because of the pandemic, all ballfield permits were rescinded, and the entire season had to be canceled. I had already paid for my permits and they had been issued to me. When the permits were rescinded, I was given the option of a refund or leaving the payment in place and it being pushed forward to the following season (2021). I was told that if I opted for the refund, I would no longer have any rights to my permits, and I would just be considered a new applicant at the end of the line. So, I opted to leave my payment to the Parks Department in place. Not much of a choice. This season I was told that if I didn't use all of my fields, permits would be revoked, and again they would no longer be my permits. Then there's the Covid form that we had to agree to or my permits would not be issued to me. Among the many Covid-related rules, we are told that if a team racks up three infractions, permits would be revoked from the entire league. This is grossly unfair, and I would hope that in the end this would not be enforced. And what about the thousands of people that use the Central Park and do not have to abide by any protocols. It seems that the Permit Department does its best to maintain an adversarial position vis-a-vis the leagues that have served this City for so long.

In the 29 years that I have been running the Edso Sports league, I have given out numerous 10-year awards. Also, I have one team that has been with Edso for the entire 29 years. I have another that has been with me for 28 of those years. There are a number of teams that have played in the Edso league for 20 plus years, including three teams from Macy's. The New York Road Runners play in this league and have for many years. I could name many others that have been Edso teams for a decade or more, e.g., Emblem Health, Macmillan, New York Presbyterian Hospital. All in all, I would say that Edso is doing a very good job of giving many hundreds of New Yorkers a spring and summer to look forward to.

This season, because of Covid, I am finding that several of my teams cannot sign up their teams because many people are still working from home. This presents a problem according to what I was told by the Permit Department re their reclaiming my permits. If I cannot fill my fields, I would like to have the option of pushing my permits forward to the 2022 season. After all, the Parks Department still has my payment. That should mean something relative to my rights to those fields.

On a more general note, the sports leagues in this City are in a partnership with the Parks Department. It seems to me that it would be a much more effective way to do business if permit holders were treated as partners and not as adversaries.



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**Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Parks and Recreation**

Int. No. 1959-2020

Submitted by Ken Podziba, President and CEO

Bike New York

January 22, 2021

Good afternoon, Chairman Koo and distinguished members of the City Council. My name is Ken Podziba and I am the President and CEO of Bike New York.

I am here today to enthusiastically support the establishment of an Office of Sports and Recreation.

Prior to arriving at Bike New York, I served as the Commissioner of the NYC Sports Commission for 12 years, and I believe that it would be tremendously beneficial to New Yorkers to bring back a form of this office as proposed in Int. 1959-2020.

The Sports Commission, under my leadership, served as an important engine for the city's economic growth through sports. We competed with other cities throughout the country and around the world for the right to bring major sporting events to New York. We also marketed the city to event organizers as an ideal place for them to host their athletic events. And we assisted them throughout the entire process, including guiding them through the city's bureaucracy, which they simply wouldn't be able to do on their own. This agency served as the City's liaison to this multi-billion industry, including our teams and our major annual events, that was estimated to account for 2.5 percent of the city's total annual economy.

Beyond the economics, the Sports Commission had a big heart and focused most of its time and resources on transforming the lives of the city's most underserved communities. After having numerous conversations with Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez, the sponsor of this bill, and knowing how he's dedicated so much of his life towards improving the lives of our city's most economically disadvantaged people, I'm convinced that this office will be fully dedicated towards helping New Yorkers, especially our young people and those from the most vulnerable populations, lead healthier and more productive lives. There are countless nonprofit organizations that provide needed recreation and sports programs to New Yorkers, but unfortunately not everyone knows about them or how to access their services. Wouldn't it be great to have a mayoral office that can create awareness of these programs? For example, Bike New York offers a variety of bike education and safety skills programs, including summer camp and after-school programs -- all free of charge. I'm on

the board of directors of Achilles, a nonprofit organization that transforms the lives of people with disabilities through athletic programs and social connection. Having an influential office of the mayor encouraging New Yorkers to participate and benefit from the vast array of programs that already exist in this great city would be priceless. And there are many small grassroots sports and recreation organizations that can and should be doing more to help the residents in their neighborhoods. They just need a little help and some technical assistance. And this office can be a source of support to them and a real force for positive changes.

More than half of New York City's adult population is overweight or obese and nearly half of all elementary school students and Head Start students do not have a healthy weight. I'm confident that a newly created Office of Sports & Recreation would work well with the Department of Parks & Recreation, Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Department of Education, Department of Youth & Community Development and other governmental agencies to get more New Yorkers moving. An inspirational Executive Director would serve as an important spokesperson for the city and reach out to various groups of New Yorkers, including students, about the importance of physical, mental and emotional health. This leader would also be able to advise the mayor on issues, propose policy and deliver mayoral proclamations at public events.

When I was at the Sports Commission, one of most impactful programs we initiated was also one of easiest ones to implement. It was called "Mayor's Take Me Out to the Ballgame" program. We were able to get teams, venue operators and event organizers to donate hundreds of thousands of tickets to their events - the ones that didn't sell out -- and we in turn distributed them to organizations that helped the city's most underserved communities. We received the most heartwarming letters from children, many of whom had never seen a live sporting event before. And some children even wrote about how it was their first opportunity to visit another neighborhood or borough and how inspirational and moving it was to see their heroes in person for the first time. The point I'm trying to make is that even a small office with a small budget can make a tremendous difference on countless lives. I believe a newly created Mayor's Office of Sports & Recreation would help equal the playing field in our city and put so many New Yorkers on a better path to good health and success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



POET-ATHLETES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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"I never come to Jacob Schiff Park unless the America SCORES coaches are here. It's too dangerous, too much fighting. You guys make it safer for me and my teammates." Poet-athlete Hugo shares this sentiment with his coaches and teammates often -- he relies on America SCORES New York programming to safely enjoy parks in his community.

America SCORES New York (ASNY) seeks to create equitable opportunities for young people to experience sport, express themselves and inspire positive change off the field and outside the classroom. Using a social justice youth development framework, we emphasize racial equity, fair play, teamwork and youth voice as key drivers of building a better, more equitable New York City.

The young people we serve often don't have access to the expensive and exclusive "pay-to-play" sports framework that has come to define youth sport, have limited opportunities for sport at their public schools, and minimal access to available green spaces throughout New York City where they can play and exercise without caution or concern.

Each year 1,500 ASNY poet-athletes from 25 NYC public schools frequent public parks, school yards and gyms throughout Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. Dozens of our community events bring together teammates, families, and neighbors, furthering a sense of community and teamwork that we emphasize with our young people every day.

Operating since 2001, our reach has grown exponentially, doubling the number of youth we serve and tripling the boroughs we reach. I'm proud of our team and our relationships with our communities, but we need the development of strong city-based offices to support us and all the organizations like us using sport for youth development, a proven and effective youth development tool. We have a long waitlist of schools to join our program, and believe this office could deepen the reach and impact of our sector.

Our extended partnerships with the Department of Education, Parks Department and the Department of Youth and Community Development have allowed us to hire teachers to work with us as coaches, build relationships with school administration, administer safe programming on the city parks spaces, and work closely with other organizations within our schools. Additionally, we've had the opportunity to be involved with the New York City Soccer Initiative, which is NYCFC's partnership with NYC Parks, the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, Adidas and Etihad Airway. While these relationships are positive and vital for youth sport, it's nowhere near enough.

With the formation of the Office of Sports Development and Youth Performance and alongside the NYC Parks and Recreation Department, the Department of Education, and the Department of Youth and Community Development, America SCORES New York is committed to continuing working in partnership with schools and our students, who are future community leaders, artists and athletes.

I was born and raised in Brooklyn by my mother and experienced lack of access to quality sports programs in my neighborhood, especially to non-traditional sports that are less saturated and most fruitful in its return. Organized sport substantially develops socio-emotional learning, discipline, confidence, resiliency, leadership, and teaming skills. By chance, I was afforded the opportunity to the fence at the highest level because of a non-profit called Peter Westbrook Foundation, which is one of a kind. I firmly believe this caliber of offering is a responsibility of the city. I was only one of the thousands in the public school system that had this access to those high-quality sports education, which carried me to more than 30 countries, to the White House, to the Olympics, twice, Columbia University, and more. Fencing opened those doors for me. And ultimately, this sports education allowed me to fulfill my potential and become World Champion and 8x world medalist.

Every child should have the opportunity to become balanced, well-rounded and capable individual through sport. And the chance to become a champion, if that is their will. That's sadly not the case in the privatized sport system we now operate in. Sport is a social right every youth should have access to and it is largely recognized as that for the rest of the world. Now more than ever, in the midst of Covid-19 and a divisive climate that costs too many black and brown people their lives, children need outlets for fun and a structure to become their best selves. Sports, especially non-traditional sports, can provide that. I am a testament to that. In the greatest city in the world, there is no excuse for why our youth have limited access to the benefits of sport and the opportunity for athletic success.

-Nzingha Prescod, OLY

2/23/2021

Committee on Parks and Recreation

Re: Permit issuance and CPR/AED certifications.

Thank you for taking the time to allow me to testify here. My name is Billy Reilly and I'm a board member and Health and Safety coordinator for Downtown Little League here in lower Manhattan.

I know our league has been on record before but would like to again say that the Parks Department have done a great job and continue to do a great job handling our park system, particularly during this past year. It's a daunting task only made more difficult by the current health crisis.

The topic I wanted to bring up is regarding CPR/AED compliance and the issuing of our permits for our youth programs. This is an issue that not only affects our league but many youth leagues in the city for this upcoming Spring. With the season quickly approaching and, at the time of this communication, COVID-19 positivity rates in the city at 8.21% and vaccination rates below 10%, our leagues are having difficulty mandating our volunteers to go to in-person, indoor CPR/AED training, where we unaware of the facility's ventilation or the other individuals attending and also knowing that portion of the training requires practicing rescue breaths into a training mannequin used by other individuals. From a health and safety aspect, ethically we cannot recommend this and most of our volunteers have expressed concern over this as well.

To be clear, we are not asking to eliminate the CPR/AED policy. In fact we are big believers of the policy. Our league, as an example in a normal year, will have 20-30 of our coaches CPR/AED certified so that at least certified 1-2 coaches will be on any NYC park we use at a given time and we would like to continue with that. What we are asking is a workable solution this year given the public health issue we are dealing with. I would like to propose two alternatives.

The easiest and safest solution is to accept online CPR/AED training that American Red Cross or American Heart Association provide since they are the gold standards in this type of emergency training. Myself and several of our board members vetted the American Red Cross online training to see if met the criteria we felt was needed to properly train an individual in case of an emergency. We found it very comprehensive and thorough. I am a physical therapist and have taken many CPR/AED in-person trainings and I would argue it was actually more comprehensive than some of the in-person trainings I have done in the past.

Another possible solution is a 90 day extension of the expiration dates on our previous CPR/AED certifications. This is something, I believe was allowed for the issuance of Fall youth sport permits.

These certifications are valid for up to two years. Given that many of our coaches were last certified in Feb/March 2019, most of them are coming up on expiration. And because of the onset of the Pandemic last March, we were unable to train any of our new coaches last year. This extension will allow us time to set up outdoor training solutions when the weather warms up or, Possibly, reduce concerns of indoor training if the positivity rate continues to decrease and the vaccination rate increases.

As a recommendation, we feel allowing the acceptance of online training is preferable because we feel having more of our coaches trained currently and more recently will provide better safety preparedness. In either case, this is an extremely time sensitive subject since Spring youth sports are slated to start in the next few weeks and permits will need to be issued soon.

Thank you again for your time and diligence with this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'William Reilly', with a stylized flourish at the end.

William Reilly, MSPT, CSCS

Downtown Little League

Board Member; Health and Safety Coordinator

BReilly18@gmail.com

646-241-3340

HRCS is a non-profit organization that provides youth development programs and community sailing at locations in Chelsea and Inwood. We serve approximately 3000 New York City youth and adults annually.

HRCS fully supports the creation of the Sport Department Office, bill Int. 1959-2020, for the following reasons:

- HRCS is part of an innovative collection of youth serving non-profits that use sport to enhance the academic and social outcomes of NYC youth. Many NYC youth development programs are nationally recognized models, but there is little coordination within NYC to recognize and support their contribution to the city at large. An office like this would help do coordinate, support, and promote organization doing this important work.
- There are many shared resources that sports groups can and would use in conjunction with NYC Parks and Recreation and the NYC Department of Education. A centralized office could support the coordination and allocation of those shared resources. Currently each entity acts independently to make their own arrangements. A centralized office could help streamline processes.
- There are national resources and events that could be made available to NYC. HRCS vantage point is on sporting events that could be held along NYC's vast waterfront. For example, HRCS holds an event each year called *Heroes on the Hudson* in conjunction with the Veteran's Administration. The event supports vets with disabilities through sport and recreation, and brings national facilitators. We believe we could bring more events like this to NYC if we had a partner in City Gov't that we could turn to to help promote these activities and navigate the bureaucratic processes to host such an event. Currently, no such support system exists.

For these reasons, HRCS supports the bill to create a sports department office that would bring together the promotion of amateur and professional sports along with youth sports and the various organizations using sport to promote the health and well-being of young New Yorkers.

**Testimony for City Council Parks and Recreation Committee Hearing
February 22, 2020**

For 10 years since 1996, the member organizations of the United Athletic Association (UAA) from the 5 Boroughs presented the Mayors Cup Citywide Championships for the Mayor's Office via the New York City Sports Commission.

Throughout the 10 years, the UAA was given the authority to organize the Mayors Cup Citywide Championships as we saw fit. We opted to make it a Fundraiser for the Parks Department Citywide Youth Baseball/Softball Championships.

We raised over \$100,000 dollars for this cause while bringing the City together with simultaneous tournaments in each borough over a two-week period which culminated on the biggest stage in New York City, the Central Parks Great Lawn. Champions from each borough came to Central Park and at the end of that day we crowned City Champions in Women, Men and Coed Divisions. This was a multifaceted win for the City, Mayor's Office and Youth/Adult Sports.

We are strongly in favor of your idea of refocusing the commission's purpose to emphasize youth sports and to grow amateur and scholastic sports recreation.

In addition, expanding on your idea, the office should be staffed in some form by student athletes which could prepare them for a career in sports management; if they so choose to pursue.

I have additional recommendations and suggestions and request more time to meet and discuss further.