

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Joint Committees on Education and Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to hold public hearings to examine the cost and liabilities for the School District and the Department of Parks and Recreation to ease the barriers of access to youth sports.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia youth sports programs lack access to areas to in order conduct consistent team practices. The youth in Philadelphia face increased great disparate access to sports programs and opportunities, due to a multitude of socioeconomic factors. Currently, there is no common facility utilization analysis for underfunded youth sports programs. A large barrier in the youth sports programs is access to facilities where teams can practice, and their accessibility to the children and families they serve; and

WHEREAS, Sports are a vital aspect of youth development. Not only is it beneficial for the youth's physical health, but emotional health too. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, youth participation in sports leads to lower levels of depression and anxiety, higher self-esteem, reduced risk of substance abuse and risky behaviors, increased cognitive performance, and more. On the topic of educational and career success, it has been found that youth participation in sports leads to higher levels of academic achievements, improved teamwork and social responsibility, improved educational and occupational skills, and a higher likelihood of attending and graduating college. Sports are a gateway to success among the youth; therefore, the City of Philadelphia must ensure the resources needed to provide adequate facilities; and

WHEREAS, In the City of Philadelphia, the sports facility shortage affects and despairs many sports leagues across the city. The Parkside Saints, a football and cheerleading league that serves over 200 kids ages 5-18 each year. Currently, they play on makeshift fields on Belmont Avenue, where kids have been injured from tripping over gopher holes. The "fields" frequently flood, goal posts barely stand upright, and the coaches paint the sidelines themselves. Due to the shortage of space and funding, this league now must take their success into their own hands. Reports say that when the Parkside Saints occasionally practiced in the suburbs, there was a stark difference. These fields were equipped with two fields, a turf field, and tracks. Compared to their usual practice area, coaches said, "We basically play in dirt;" and

WHEREAS, This shortage is not solely a lack of space issue. It is a wealth inequity problem as well. In recent years, a "pay-to-play" approach to sports has sky rocketed, leaving local sports leagues to disband. Club sports that charge a fee provide adequate facilities that draws participation away from local schools in the city. This approach not only weakens participation within local school leagues, but it also excludes those who cannot pay the price, leaving them with little to no sports to join. Low participation met with inadequate facilities are a recipe for local school sports to disband and die out. The city must combat this problem by providing an increase in facilities for Philadelphia schools to utilize. If there are facilities that can compete with those who charge a fee, we can level the playing field for those who cannot financially access club sports; and

WHEREAS, There are already plans in motion to increase the number of facilities for youth sports in Philadelphia. The FDR Park Plan proposed 12 new multipurpose fields open for public use. These fields have been designed to manage their own stormwater, preventing the issue of flooding that many schools have had to work around. The Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative has provided extensive data on the barriers that

youth sports face in the city. The “Game on Philly” report has mapped out where the city is falling behind and recommendations on topics such as access, quality, engagement, research, and resources. This data can aid in providing solutions to end this problem of facility shortages; now, therefore, be it.

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it calls on the Joint Committees on Education and Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to hold public hearings to examine the cost and liabilities for the School District and the Department of Parks and Recreation to ease the barriers of access to youth sports.