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Recognizing and honoring the staff of the Philadelphia Department of Parks & Recreation for their dedicated service as essential workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

WHEREAS, The hard-working staff members of Philadelphia's Department of Parks & Recreation have provided continuous service to communities in the midst of a global pandemic and severe budget cuts by devising creative solutions and remaining dedicated to our City's most vulnerable residents; and

WHEREAS, In Fiscal Year 2021, Parks & Recreation's budget was cut by $12 million--twenty percent--causing them to eliminate between 1,200 to 1,300 seasonal positions, cancel both the pool and Dell seasons, and eliminate key programs; and

WHEREAS, Despite these budgetary challenges, Parks & Rec leadership & staff both responded to the needs presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and worked to preserve recreational opportunities for Philadelphians; and

WHEREAS, In the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Parks & Rec pivoted their work to focus on providing food access to food insecure Philadelphians, by turning fourteen rec centers into food pantries that distributed a total of 98,088 food boxes, serving 51,526 meals through Older Adult Centers, and serving 1,003,496 meals at day camps and PlayStreets; and

WHEREAS, In the midst of a fifty percent increase in visitors to parks and a 1300% increase in bike and recreational traffic on MLK drive, Parks & Rec created the Social Distance Ambassador Program, which distributed over 8,000 masks throughout the City; and

WHEREAS, Parks and Rec staff transitioned in person programming to virtual activities for the physical and mental well-being of residents through Parks & Rec @ Home, creating over 275 videos with over 700,000 impressions; and

WHEREAS, Parks & Rec staff worked diligently to save the summer of 2020, by hosting over 100 summer camps with nearly 2,000 campers, opening 105 spraygrounds, providing summer work for 944 teenagers and young adults, and designating over 350 PlayStreets throughout the City; and

WHEREAS, Starting in September 2020, Parks & Rec staff also turned 40 rec centers into Access Centers, providing Philadelphia's most vulnerable students a safe place for digital learning and giving working families a no-cost option for childcare; and

WHEREAS, In February 2021, Parks & Rec further adapted to the limitations of the pandemic by introducing E-Sports, in partnership with Nerd Street Gamers, by kicking off an NBA2K21 tournament for teenagers from 29 Parks & Rec sites; and

WHEREAS, Planning is underway for a robust 2021 summer season, including pool openings, 120 summer

camps, 350 PlayStreets, and over 100 spraygrounds openings; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Parks & Rec staff have been essential workers and service providers, particularly to communities of color throughout Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes and honors the staff of the Philadelphia Department of Parks & Recreation for their dedicated service as essential workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the staff of the Philadelphia Department of Parks as evidence of the sincere appreciation and respect of this legislative body.

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