

**REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HOLLY J. MITCHELL AND JANICE HAHN  
JULY 27, 2021**

**Removing Barriers to Aquatics Programming for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities at County Swimming Pools**

Historically, swimming pools have been a space of inequity and exclusion in the United States. Both in the public and private spheres, access to swimming pools was closely tied to income and race. However, in more recent decades, public swimming pools have been critical to expanding access to life-saving swimming lessons, recreational programming, and exercise opportunities, particularly for low-income communities, communities of color, and seniors on fixed incomes. Aquatics programming still has room to grow in terms of inclusivity and equity, particularly for communities of color and individuals with disabilities. However proven strategies to increase accessibility exist, such as targeted programming, reduced-cost options, scholarships, and partnerships with foundations and philanthropic organizations. Through expanding targeted access and programming for key communities that rely on public pools, Los Angeles County (County) can continue to close the gap in access to health-serving, recreation infrastructure and programs.

The County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has a strong track record on issues of equity through its development and use of tools such as the Parks Needs Assessment, and the recent introduction of Core Program and Community Program

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partnerships aimed at expanding park programming and increasing access to park facilities. DPR also has prioritized providing free access to recreational swimming for all ages as a core summer program and has successfully leveraged philanthropic partnerships to provide low-cost or no-cost swim lessons at swimming pools in the highest need areas. After over a year of stay-at-home orders and facility closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of DPR's focus on equitable and affordable community programs is clearer than ever.

This year, prior to reopening County facilities, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved revised facility rental fees charged by DPR for use of County park facilities. Along with the revised fees, DPR updated its process for reserving and purchasing recreational program passes and moved to an online-only reservation system, ActiveNet. These updates were responsive to COVID-19-related budget constraints, helped standardize processes, increased revenues for DPR, and eliminated the need for families to stand in long lines to register for programs. However, as County facilities have begun to reopen, it has become clear that the new system has created unintended barriers for individuals with limited internet access or literacy, which is particularly acute in low-income areas and among senior citizens. In addition, key communities have been disproportionately impacted by the updated programming fees, some of which were previously subsidized by grant funding and one-time funding allocations. This includes seniors on fixed incomes who represent a large portion of DPR's aquatics program participants. Other jurisdictions, including the City of Los Angeles, have created an aquatics discount program for seniors, youth, and people with disabilities as a strategy to expand access.

DPR and the Board have taken important steps to institutionalize equity and increase access in recreation programming. We must continue to assess and build on this work, particularly as the County commits to return from the COVID-19 pandemic better than before, so that we continue to support the health and wellbeing of all County residents.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

1. Delegate authority to the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, or her designee, to develop a scholarship program for aquatics programming and swimming pool activities for seniors (persons 65 years or older) and people with disabilities.
2. Instruct the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation to:
  - a. Develop and implement a scholarship program for aquatics programming and swimming pool activities for seniors and people with disabilities; and
  - b. Report back in writing within 30 days with a plan to reduce barriers to online access to Los Angeles County's ActiveNet system including identification of any resources or staffing needs required to implement the plan.
3. Instruct the Chief Executive Officer, in collaboration with the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Aging Branch of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services to report back in writing during Supplemental Changes for FY 2021-22 on the availability of funding to backfill lost revenue resulting from implementation of the discount program.

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