

**MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL**

June 6, 2023

**Proclaiming June 24, 2023, as “Play Day” in Los Angeles County**

Sports, play, and movement are essential for positive youth development. Research has shown that sports and play improves mental and physical health, increases cognitive performance, builds self-esteem, cultivates leadership skills, and leads to higher academic and career achievement.

However, access to sports, play, and movement varies across race and socioeconomic status. Those at greatest risk for poor health and wellness outcomes often have the least access to recreational opportunities. According to the Los Angeles County (County) Youth Sports Participation Survey commissioned by the LA84 Foundation, children from households with annual incomes greater than \$150,000 had a 93% sports participation rate. In contrast, children from households with annual incomes below \$35,000 only had a 68% sports participation rate.

Additional data confirm the deep inequities that exist for youth of color, including:

- Black and Latinx youth are twice as likely to reside in areas with subpar park space.
- 80% of youth, many of whom are low-income, do not currently meet Federal guidelines for daily physical activities.
- Black and Latinx youth have higher rates of stress, anxiety, and depression,

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which has only grown since the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Latinas have the lowest participation rate in sports activities in the County.

In addition, the U.S. Surgeon General recently released an advisory on the emerging epidemic of loneliness which notes that lacking social connection can increase the risk for premature death at the same rate as smoking up to 15 cigarettes per day. He also noted that the percentage of teens between the ages of 13 and 17 who say that they are online “almost constantly” has doubled since 2015. Sports, play, and movement provide a social structure that helps to nurture and develop our youth, which is vital to turning this epidemic around.

According to the Aspen Institute Project Play, youth that play sports will see better lifetime benefits, including up to 40% higher test scores, lower levels of depression, higher self-esteem, and lower healthcare costs. Youth across the County are missing out on these benefits due to systemic barriers, such as the high cost of youth sports, lack of nearby facilities, issues of neighborhood safety, lack of trauma-informed coaches, and exclusion based on disability. These barriers are known as the Play Equity Gap. Achieving play equity means removing barriers and ensuring access to sports and play for all children. Addressing the Play Equity Gap will support youth to build social and emotional skills and pathways to lifelong well-being, regardless of their race, gender, zip code, or ability.

In response to addressing the Play Equity Gap, the County’s Board of Supervisors and Chief Executive Office provided American Rescue Plan Act funding to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to subsidize the EveryBody Plays program, which serves over 130,000 youth, and provides sports programming that includes free sports clinics and competitive youth leagues. In addition, DPR has many other programs to ensure that youth have access to sports, play, and movement including: the Sports Division which serves over 10,000 youth with affordable and accessible competitive youth leagues and sports clinics; EveryBody Swims which serves over 200,000 youth and offers open play and swimming at County pool facilities; Parks After Dark which offers free recreational programming, sports clinics, and fitness classes for youth and girls at 34 different parks; and EveryBody Explores, a free nature-based program offered at eight

nature centers and access to free overnight camping for children under age 11 at Regional Parks across the County to promote access to nature.

DPR has expanded its partnerships with professional sports organizations to support access to sports, play, and movement. These incredible partnerships include the Clippers Foundation, Lakers Foundation, Dodgers Foundation, Gasol Foundation, LA84 Foundation, USA Lacrosse Foundation, U.S. Soccer Foundation, Southern California Municipal Athletic Federation, and the LA Rams Foundation.

The LA84 Foundation and the Play Equity Fund are issuing a call to action in support of the County's youth with Play Day on June 24, 2023. Play Day is a national annual celebration to uplift the lifelong benefits of sports, play, and movement for youth in the neighborhoods where they live. The epicenter of Play Day will be at Exposition Park in the City of Los Angeles, with activations in each Supervisorial District. Play Day partners and participants will promote the joy and value of playing together as a community. Play Day celebrates and values our youth and shows that sports and the joy of play have the power to connect us, help us understand each other better, and build a more promising future.

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

1. Proclaim June 24, 2023, as Play Day in Los Angeles County (County) and recognize the LA84 Foundation and the Play Equity Fund for their dedication and service to the community and for developing Play Day as a national movement and a National Day of Play for youth.
2. Direct the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), through the Countywide Communications Office, to work with all County departments to highlight this day on County websites and social media platforms and encourage all County residents to go out and play on June 24, 2023.
3. Direct the CEO, through the Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, to support Senate Bill 291 (Newman) – Pupil Rights: Recess, which would advance play equity by ensuring all K-6 pupils in California have access to a minimum standard of recess while prohibiting the withholding of recess as a form of punishment or discipline.
4. Direct the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, in collaboration

with the CEO, the Directors of the Departments of Youth Development, Public Health, Mental Health, Los Angeles County Office of Education, and other relevant departments and community partners, to report back in writing within 120 days with recommended actions the Board can take to accelerate closing the Play Equity Gap for youth in the County.

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