



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
Parks & Recreation
Kathryn Ott Lovell
Commissioner

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October 21, 2019

Pennsylvania House Children & Youth Committee
Representative Karen Boback, Majority Chair
Representative Joseph Petrarca, Minority Chair
Harrisburg, Pa. 17120

RE: HB 1831 Testimony

Dear Committee Chairs & Members:

On behalf of the City of Philadelphia, acting through the Parks & Recreation Department ("PPR"), we respectfully submit the following written testimony concerning House Bill 1831.

In its simplest terms, HB 1831 as currently drafted, exempts municipal recreation programs from the State Human Services Code definition of "child (day) care center". PPR firmly believes that the exemption is warranted and appropriate in the context of municipal recreation programming. All concerned parties clearly want the shared end-goal of child safety while away from home and in our care. To that end, you have our full and unequivocal departmental commitment now and in the future. Where we diverge is with the Pa. Department of Human Services' ("DHS") interpretation and enforcement of child day care facility regulations at local recreation facilities and over local recreation programs.

It has been stated in other settings that, "Quality, relevant content can't be spotted by an algorithm." So, here as well. The "algorithm" of DHS child day care regulations does not allow nor encourage the quality and relevant programmatic content inherent in well-established municipal recreation programs. Attempting

to shoe-horn municipal recreation programs into DHS child day care regulations is unwieldy at best and very often truly unworkable from a cost, staffing and program perspective. In Philadelphia alone, we estimate over \$2.8 million annually to bring the aggregate staffing structure to conform to the DHS regs and approximately \$50 million to make necessary physical improvements to facilities.

Consequently, while PPR supports the exemption aim of HB 1831, we also understand that public skepticism and valid questions may follow as to what replaces the DHS child care regulations to ensure our children's safety and well-being at our recreation facilities.

Therefore, we propose that HB 1831 be amended to include the following specific language:

"The term (i.e. child day care center) does not include municipal recreation programs that are operated in accordance with the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, Inc. ("PRPS") Protocol for Public Municipal Recreation programs as adopted by municipal ordinance or resolution. Municipal means any 'local government' under 53 Pa. C.S.A. Sect.2302 (relating to definitions)."

In this way, PPR and hundreds of other local/county/township parks & recreation departments throughout the Commonwealth will commit to adopt and adhere to a relevant, rigorous and realistic set of twelve (12) core standards covering public recreation programming content and certifications as previously vetted by PRPS. PRPS, its constituent members, and DHS will all share and commit to child safety goals but in a manner and through methods which make logical programmatic and staffing sense.

Furthermore, adoption of this proposed amendment will allow local communities to properly fashion program and facility standards which address their unique needs. The regulatory rubric will then be local standards tailored to local communities with local accountability through the PRPS Protocol.

The choice becomes clear—well-intentioned but largely unworkable DHS child day care regulations forcing the closure of many local facilities under threat of

State legal action and fines, or the adoption of on-point PRPS standards locally reviewed and passed.

The former choice is indirectly promoting social inequity by denying vital recreational access to the most vulnerable children in our communities; while the latter choice will speak to our shared goal of safety and relevant regulations.

We respectfully ask this Committee to weigh the choices and pass HB 1831 as proposed to be amended.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathryn Ott Lovell".

Kathryn Ott Lovell
Commissioner