



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004**

Charles Allen
Councilmember, Ward 6
Chairperson
Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Committee Member
Business and Economic Development
Health
The Judiciary & Public Safety

November 8, 2024

Nyasha Smith
Secretary to the Council
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Secretary Smith:

Today, I am introducing the ***“Department of Parks and Recreation Field Priority Access Amendment Act of 2024”***. Please find enclosed a signed copy of the legislation.

The District has one of the most active and robust youth recreational sporting communities in the country. With it comes the ever-increasing challenge of field space and scheduling. Both the Department of Parks and Recreation (“DPR”) and District of Columbia Public Schools (“DCPS”) have field space that are in high demand when available, and often in competition with different age groups as well as more selective, competitive teams across a wide range of sports.

One need only spend a few hours on a warm weeknight or weekend at The Fields at RFK to understand the immense and impressive demand for those fields and to see the challenge confronting the District. Multiple teams will divide up a single soccer field to ensure every kid gets some exercise and learn more about being part of a team, but that ends up being a substandard experience for the children. As a result, many sports leagues lose District families who opt to go to Maryland or Virginia, where field space is not an issue and there are fewer cancelled games or lost opportunities to reschedule following a rainout.

This bill is aimed at protecting and growing the youth sports leagues that serve all kids across the District. First, the bill grants priority access during peak youth sports times for both practice and games on DPR fields. Second, it creates a rubric in which DCPS school fields are made available without creating an undue burden on school staff or putting at risk the use of those fields for school teams and school events. Third, it puts in place protections to ensure these leagues are responsible for maintaining the safety and quality of the fields and leaving them in as good shape as they are found. Currently, DCPS fields are rarely made available to sports leagues without paying a significant fee to use them on the weekends.

For sports leagues seeking access to either a DPR or DCPS field, priority access would be granted to leagues that undergo the process of becoming a certified community-based youth sports organization with DPR. To qualify, a sports league would need to guarantee it does not restrict participation based on ability and that there is a process for ensuring low-income residents can play. The organization would need to meet several administrative requirements to ensure compliance with DCPS schools' needs and re-certify regularly. Ensuring the cleanliness and security of the fields would be a key part of retaining the permit.

Granting these community-based organizations priority access to DPR and DCPS outdoor sports fields is a straightforward and impactful way to invest in their futures and provide opportunities to keep them engaged. It also recognizes in a dense city like ours, there is only so much room to build more fields, and we should look to get the most out the fields the District already maintains.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles Allen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
Chairperson, Committee on Transportation & the Environment



Councilmember Charles Allen

A BILL

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To amend An Act To vest in the Commissioners of the District of Columbia control of street parking in said District to require the Department of Parks and Recreation to establish a program with the District of Columbia Public Schools for use of DCPS outdoor fields by certified, community-based youth sports organizations; to amend the Division of Park Services Act of 1988 to require the Department of Parks and Recreation to create a new permit program for outdoor field use by certified community-based youth sports organizations in the District and lay out the requirements for the program; to amend the Ensuring Community Access to Recreational Spaces Act of 2018 to reorder the priority level of permitted uses for recreational spaces and make conforming changes; and to amend Section 717.2 of Title 19 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations to make conforming changes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the “Department of Parks and Recreation Field Priority Access Amendment Act of 2024”.

Sec. 2. Section 6a of An Act To vest in the Commissioners of the District of Columbia control of street parking in said District, effective July 1, 1898 (30 Stat. 570; D.C. Official Code § 10–137.01) is amended by adding a new subsection (d-1) to read as follows:

“(d-1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Director of the Department shall establish a program in partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools (“DCPS”) to allow for the use of DCPS outdoor athletic and recreational fields in every ward on evenings and weekends, outside of the hours in which the fields are in active use by schools or the Department.”.

38 Sec. 3. The Division of Park Services Act of 1988, effective March 16, 1988 (D.C. Law 7-
39 209; D.C. Official Code § 10-166 *et seq.*) is amended by adding a new section 2b to read as follows:

40 “Sec. 2b. Certified community-based youth sports organizations.

41 “(a) The Department of Parks and Recreation (“Department”) shall establish a Certified
42 Community-Based Youth Sports Organization program for the issuance of outdoor field permits,
43 which shall be determined and certified by the Department.

44 “(b) A certified community-based youth sports organization seeking a permit under this
45 program shall:

46 “(1) Be a District-registered non-profit organization that is tax exempt under 26
47 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3), (4), or (6);

48 “(2) Serve at least 100% of youth under the age of 19, 75% of which are District
49 residents;

50 “(3) Not restrict participation based on ability;

51 “(4) Have a documented process to waive organization fees and uniform costs for
52 low-income families;

53 “(5) Have at least 75% of its leadership team, board of directors, or similar
54 governing body maintain a primary residence within the District; and

55 “(6) Have and maintain accident and general liability insurance.

56 “(c) Certified community-based youth sports organizations shall receive the same priority
57 when rescheduling following a weather-related cancellation as they would be allowed during the
58 initial permit application.

59 “(d) The Department shall make available to certified community-based youth sports
60 organizations any necessary lighting and be responsible for the operation of field lighting as

61 necessary at District parks and recreational fields and DCPS athletic and recreational fields during
62 the following windows each week during a season at the same rate for non-profit entities:

63 “(1) For District parks and recreational fields, Monday through Friday from 4:00
64 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., or for a DCPS school during afterschool programs Monday through Friday from
65 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.; and

66 “(2) Saturday and Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

67 “(e)(1) DCPS may provide access to bathroom or locker room facilities or security services.

68 “(2) Certified community-based youth sports organizations shall:

69 “(A) Be responsible for the cleanup and disposal of all trash or debris related
70 to their activities; and

71 “(B) Leave the athletic and recreational field secured as requested by the
72 Department or DCPS.

73 “(3) DCPS shall not pass on associated costs for staffing, custodial, or security
74 services to certified community-based youth sports organizations.

75 “(f) DCPS may cancel any permitted activity with 30 days’ notice to the community-based
76 youth sports organization that conflicts with a DCPS activity on or at the outdoor athletic and
77 recreational field.

78 “(g) The Department may suspend or revoke the certification of a community-based youth
79 sports organization if:

80 “(1) More than 25% of the permits accepted are not used in a given sports season,
81 excluding postponements due to weather or unforeseen circumstances outside of the control of the
82 certified community-based youth sports organization;

83 “(2) Any permit is transferred to or used by any other entity without the written
84 consent of the Department;

85 “(3) For a DCPS school permit, any violation of specific agreements relating to
86 cleanup, trash disposal, and securing the field after use; or

87 “(4) The certified community-based youth sports organization fails to remain in
88 good standing with the Department or meet other requirements that may be set by the Department,
89 DCPS, or other District agencies.

90 “(h) The Department shall require a certified community-based youth sports organization
91 to re-apply for certification annually.”.

92 Sec. 4. Section 3 of the Ensuring Community Access to Recreational Spaces Act of 2018,
93 effective February 22, 2019 (D.C. Law 22-210; D.C. Official Code § 38-431 *et seq.*), is amended
94 as follows:

95 (a) Subsection (a) is amended to read as follows:

96 “(a) School facilities shall be used according to the following order of priority:

97 “(1) Use of the school facility by the public school where the school facility is
98 located;

99 “(2) Use of the school facility by DCPS;

100 “(3) Community use at times designated by the Mayor; and

101 “(4) Use of the school facility by permit holders, including permits issued by the
102 Department of Parks and Recreation.

103 (b) Subsection (b)(2) is amended by adding a new subparagraph (B-i) to read as follows:

104 “(B-i) Certified community-based youth sports organizations;”.

105 (c) Subsection (c) is amended by striking the phrase “school facility” and inserting the
106 phrase “school facility, except that custodial or security fees shall not be charged for the use of a
107 field” in its place.

108 Sec. 5. Section 717.2 of Title 19 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations is
109 amended to read as follows:

110 “If more than one (1) applicant is seeking a permit for the same permitted use or equipment
111 at the same time, the Department shall establish the following priority:

112 “(a) Department-sponsored activities;

113 “(b) Athletic programs organized by DCPS, District public charter schools, or the
114 DCSAA for competitive league play and not for intramurals;

115 “(c) Certified community-based youth sports organizations as recognized by the
116 Department and youth non-profit organizations, including schools, principally serving District
117 residents;

118 “(d) Non-profit partners such as Programmatic Partners, Park Partners, and
119 Collaborative Partners or designated organizations recognized by the Department in a written
120 agreement;

121 “(e) Adult non-profit organizations principally serving District residents;

122 “(f) Other organizations, groups, or individuals for private use that are based in the
123 District; and then

124 “(g) Others.”.

125 Sec. 6. Fiscal impact statement.

126 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal impact
127 statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved
128 October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

129 Sec. 7. Effective date.

130 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
131 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as

132 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24,
133 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
134 Columbia Register.