

**CITY OF BALTIMORE  
COUNCIL BILL 09-0128R  
(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: President Rawlings-Blake, Councilmembers D'Adamo, Kraft, Henry, Cole,  
Young, Branch, Clarke, Spector, Welch, Holton, Reisinger, Conaway, Curran  
Introduced and adopted: April 20, 2009

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**A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING**

**Request for Budget Action – Recreation and Parks – Restoration  
of Funding for Recreation Centers**

FOR the purpose of requesting the Mayor to restore funding for recreation centers, child care centers, Police Athletic League Centers (PAL), and City pools in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget and urging the Police Commissioner to work with the Director of Recreation and Parks to maintain a police presence in former Police Athletic League Centers.

**Recitals**

The Department of Recreation and Parks recommended Fiscal 2010 budget statement reflects significant changes in the management and operation of City recreation facilities, resulting in an overall increase in the structured recreational programming for children and youth. While this reorganization will result in an overall increase of centers, it will also mean the closure of several recreation centers, childcare centers, PAL centers, and pools, as well as the conversion of the remaining PAL centers into recreation centers.

Even in financially troubled times, the large number of negative influences presented daily to Baltimore's youth necessitates a renewed emphasis on recreation centers and other entities charged with shepherding our children. The importance of constructive activities and supervised play cannot be understated, particularly to youth in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program was created within the National Recreation and Park Association, recognizing that urban parks and recreational facilities often serve the most at-risk children who lack quality open space and recreational facilities immediately near their homes. Summer basketball leagues, after-school programs, and many other activities offer constructive alternatives to gangs, drugs, and crime.

The Association also advises that one of the keys to addressing many chronic health conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, and to preventive health in general, is providing citizens of all ages with easy access to places for physical activity. In urban communities like Baltimore, public parks and recreation centers are among the most accessible, affordable, and safest places where families, children, and seniors can be physically active.

Recreation centers and pools also meet another essential need within our communities by giving youth the opportunity to engage in sports and other aerobic activities. This is vitally important because of the prevalence of obesity across our city. The Baltimore City Health Status Report 2008 indicates that, according to the 2007 Youth Risk Behavioral Surveillance System (a

**EXPLANATION:** Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.  
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 school-based survey), Baltimore high school students were 40% more likely to be obese than  
2 high school students statewide. The difference was largely due to female students; females in  
3 Baltimore were more than twice as likely to be obese.

4 Given the health challenges of our young people and the dangers the streets pose to our at-  
5 risk youth, it is imperative that all of our recreation centers, child care centers, and pools remain  
6 open and that the police continue to provide guidance and form alliances that discourage anti-  
7 social behavior. The PAL centers, many located in youth and crime dense neighborhoods,  
8 provide critical linkages between youth attendees and the police officers that serve their  
9 communities. Stationing “Officer Friendlys” within PAL centers has proved to be a mutually  
10 beneficial relationship for the officers and the youth, shattering both the perceived and physical  
11 walls between these two groups.

12 The powerful effects of the informal social and public safety networks cultivated within the  
13 PAL centers should be formally protected by the Baltimore Police Department, even with the  
14 discontinuation of the program. The development of a Memorandum of Understanding between  
15 the Baltimore Police Department and the Department of Recreation and Parks would serve to  
16 safeguard this relationship by ensuring that officers continue to be a visible presence in our  
17 community centers.

18 The influence of crime and drugs in our city cannot be mitigated without the targeted,  
19 supervised activities offered in the City’s recreation centers. Without these centers, the systemic  
20 development of a generation of Baltimore’s youth will be at risk. With the prevalence of  
21 violence in our City, our recreation and child care centers must also strive to maintain high  
22 standards and continue to recruit community youth. City residents should be able to leave for  
23 work knowing that their children will be cared for in a City recreation or child care center.

24 It is important that structurally sound recreation centers, child care centers, and pools slated  
25 to close in the upcoming months be encouraged to grow and allowed to continue to provide these  
26 vital services for our City’s kids. The sociocultural opportunities afforded to Baltimore’s youth  
27 through these centers must be a top fiscal priority for the current Administration. Therefore, we  
28 respectfully request that the Mayor find the funds to keep these resources open for the well being  
29 of Baltimore’s youngest residents.

30 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the  
31 Mayor is hereby requested to restore funding for recreation centers, child care centers, and City  
32 pools in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget, and the Police Commissioner is hereby urged to work with  
33 the Director of Recreation and Parks to maintain a police presence in former Police Athletic  
34 League Centers.

35 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the  
36 Police Commissioner, the Director of Recreation and Parks, the Director of Finance, and the  
37 Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.