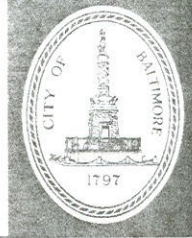


CITY OF BALTIMORE

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

PORTIA E. HARRIS, Acting Director
DR. RALPH W.E. JONES, JR. BUILDING
3001 East Drive - Druid Hill Park
Baltimore, Maryland 21217
410-396-6132

February 6, 2008

Honorable President Stephanie Rawlings Blake
Members of the City Council
Baltimore City Council
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

RE: **Council Bill # 08-0004R (Resolution)**
Inter-Agency Violent Crime Reduction Strategy

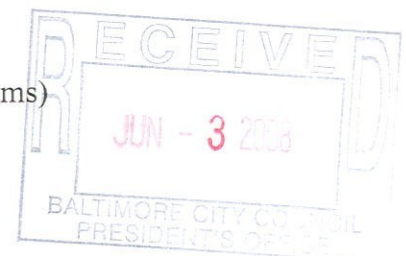
Dear President Rawlings Blake:

The Department of Recreation and Parks submits its support of Council Bill #08-0004R. The bill is for the purpose of requesting the Baltimore City Police Commissioner, the Baltimore City Health Commissioner, and the Director of Recreation and Parks to combine the unique resources of each agency to develop an interactive, inter-agency strategy to address health, criminal justice, recreation, employment, and other socio-economic issues confronting Baltimore City youth in a comprehensive response to the factors that contribute to or facilitate acts of violence by or upon our City's most vulnerable citizens.

The Department of Recreation and Parks recognizes the compelling need to address the issue of increasing violence and the persistent gang related activity in many communities that we serve. In response to this issue, the Bureau of Recreation has developed the **R.E.A.L. Program (Recreation Encouraging Anti-Violence and Leadership)**, which provides a programmatic framework directed toward prevention and social intervention at the 46 recreation centers operated by our agency. More intense effort will be focused on those communities experiencing more persistent incidents propelled by gang activity, crime and victimization rates.

Our objective is to offer recreational and educational programs, which address alternatives to gang involvement, violent and anti-social behavior among program participants. Programs designed to address the recreational/social needs of youth ages 5-12 and 13-19 and their families to deter involvement in organized/identified gangs. These objectives will be met through the following:

- Staff training/education/information sharing
- Public Awareness Campaign (existing patrons in all programs)



**Page #2: Recreation and Parks' Agency Response - Council Bill # 07-0290R
(Resolution) Inter-Agency Violent Crime Reduction Strategy**

- Programmatic expansion to include specific programs with an anti-violence focus
- Community involvement/engagement
- Leadership training and development opportunities for youth

Programs Offered:

Alternatives to Violence Workshops (AVP) - Seminars, rap sessions, speakers who introduce successful personal interaction methods that encourage youth to resist provocation and transform violent situations.

Gang Resistance and Education Training (GREAT Program) - The program provides education, history and sociology of gang involvement by inviting speakers that have experienced gang life.

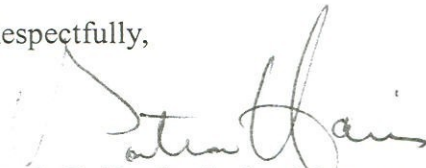
H.I.P.P (Help Increase the Peace Program) - Participants are invited to explore the world and how violence plays a part in it. Activities are offered which encourage youth to strengthen communities through action, dispel stereotypes, enhance communication skills and promote non-violence.

The programs listed are incorporated in our Teen Night initiative at all 46 Recreation Centers with special focus on those communities that have experienced the highest level of violence: Barclay, Bentalou, Collington Square, Greenmount, Harlem Park, James McHenry, Oliver, Patapsco, Samuel Morse, Tench Tilghman.

We feel confident that an interagency collaboration to address the City's violent crime issues will result in stronger and safer communities.

The Department of Recreation and Parks supports Council Bill #08-0004R.

Respectfully,



Portia E. Harris, Acting Director

PEH/VSO

cc: Angela Gibson, Legislative Liaison to the City Council