

Testimony of Erin Prangley, Softball Administrator
Montgomery County Little League

Montgomery County Council FY23 Operating Budget Public Hearing
Supporting Gender Equity in Sports and
Opposing Delay of Phase II Blair H.S. Athletic Fields Renovation

April 20, 2022

Montgomery County Little League supports the county's investment in recreational programs that promote gender equity and access to sports for girls and other underserved communities. In particular, I want to thank Councilmember Hans Riemer for his leadership on this issue. MCLL supports Councilman Riemer's proposals to fund work on equity issues required by the upcoming County Sports Commission.

MCLL is a non-profit youth baseball and softball organization that has been in operation for over 15 years. Our league will support 2700 players this spring, the overwhelming and growing number of which are from lower county. Because of our commitment to gender equity, our softball program participation has more than doubled in just one year and we expect similar growth in the future.

Fifty-years after Title IX required gender equity in extracurricular sports activities at federally-funded schools, a February 2022 study by the Office of Legislative Oversight found Montgomery County parents and student-athletes have observed examples of boys' sports being prioritized over girls' sports and local sports programs serve more males than females. Yet girls, especially girls of color and those from low income families, need playing opportunities now more than ever. Girls and women who play sports have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem and lower levels of depression. High school girls who play sports are less likely to be involved in an unintended pregnancy, more likely to get better grades in school and more likely to graduate than girls who do not play sports. Young athletes who were not able to participate in sports during COVID reported higher levels of depression and suicidal thoughts. It is a critical public health concern to provide more space for sports opportunities for our girls and all of our young athletes as soon as possible.

The Council must do more to address gender equity in sports opportunities. This includes fully funding Councilman Riemer's proposal for the Department of Recreation to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to advance local recreation-based sports programs, especially in underserved communities, increase opportunities for girls, as well as any other work required by the upcoming County Sports Commission. The Council must also reject any delay of improvements to Blair High School Athletic fields. The renovations to the softball field will dramatically increase opportunities for girls softball at this critical time.

Thank you.
Erin Prangley