**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Department of Parks and Recreation**



Public Oversight Roundtable on

The District's Crime Prevention Strategies for Summer 2017

Testimony of

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Director

The Honorable Councilmember Charles Allen

Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety

Council of the District of Columbia

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John A. Wilson Building

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, D.C. 20004

**Introduction**

Good morning, Councilmember Allen, members of the committee, and members of the public. I am Keith Anderson, the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). I am pleased to testify before you today on DPR’s role in the District's crime prevention strategies for this summer.

DPR’s mission is to enhance the quality of life and wellness for DC residents and visitors by providing equal access to affordable and quality recreational services. Through our parks, recreation facilities, and programmatic offerings, DPR encourages residents to **Move**, **Grow**, and **Be Green**.

* To **Move**, DPR provides all residents affordable, enjoyable opportunities for physical fitness and recreation;
* To **Grow**, DPR supports personal development among residents through self-enrichment activities – like classes, clubs, tours, and lessons; and
* To **Be Green**, DPR promotes practices that connect residents to their local environment and economy.

In total, DPR has more than 900 acres of green space, 31 urban gardens and 5 partner urban farms, 375 parks, 12 dog parks, 94 playgrounds, 110 outdoor basketball courts, 154 outdoor tennis courts, 69 baseball diamonds, 41 playing fields, 19 outdoor pools, 15 indoor pools, 4 children’s pools, 25 spray parks, 74 recreation centers, 34 indoor gymnasiums, 22 outdoor fitness areas, 27 indoor fitness areas, 7 boxing rings, and 6 skate board spots. Additionally, we provide over 100 unique programs across the city in the following categories: sports, health and fitness; aquatics; early and middle childhood programs; teen programs; senior programs; therapeutic recreation; environmental education; and personal enrichment. I encourage everyone here and watching on TV to visit our properties, take advantage of our programming and to “Move, Grow and be Green” with DPR.

**The Agency’s Role in the District’s Summer Safety Initiatives**

With a wealth of summer youth programming, DPR plays a critical role in the Mayor’s safety initiatives by providing District youth opportunities for personal development. These programs divert youth from potentially negative experiences and, alternatively, support positive growth. I’d like to highlight three particular programs which demonstrate our role in the summer safety initiatives: DPR Summer Camps, the Roving Leaders program, and DPR’s participation in the DC Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP).

From June 19th to August 11th, DPR provides eight weeks of themed camps for over 4,500 youths. For example, participants have the opportunity to join: Spanish Camp, Camp Verano, Discovery Camp, Little Explorers, Little Engineers, and various sports camps (Soccer, Tennis, Ballet, Cheerleading, Ultimate Frisbee, etc.). This year, DPR is holding more than 110 separate summer camps throughout the District. The diverse DPR summer camps entertain District adolescents, support positive growth in our preteens, and engage the teen population with economic and leadership development programs. Development and execution of summer programming is some of DPR’s most important work, and we are intensely focused on the goal of providing enjoyable, active, and creative experiences. Participants have the opportunity learn in a fun, interactive environment; experience rich cultural events; and, of course, play an array of sports at our rec centers and pools.

In addition to our summer programming, the DPR Roving Leaders program hires 40 leaders to prevent, neutralize, and control hostile behavior in youth and youth groups through the development of positive relationships and experiences. The Roving Leaders utilize recreation and leisure time activities as the intervening vehicle for re-directing anti-social and aggressive behavior. They also provide quality outreach, support systems, and social service referrals. Additionally, during the summer months, the Roving Leaders offer mobile recreation, which includes the DPR Fun Wagon, Skatemobile, movie nights, rock wall, and obstacle course. They offer three camps aimed at reducing violence – Camp Footloose, a sports camp; Talented Ladies of the Community Camp for at-risk young women; and Youth Motivation Camp for at-risk young men.

The Roving Leader outreach staff works closely with other government agencies and community groups on Safer, Stronger DC to ensure that the community social, educational, employment, and health service needs are met. For example, they conduct daily conference calls with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) to discuss potential issues around schools and recreation centers and to identify particular Police Service Areas (PSAs) that need resources. Through this coordination, the Roving Leaders and MPD hold events such as National Night Out and Beat the Street in targeted PSAs. Additionally, the Roving Leaders partner with the DC Housing Authority (DCHA) to provide similar positive programing to engage the youth and families on DCHA properties. On average, each Roving Leader event serves 50 to 100 participants.

Finally, the agency’s participation in the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (MBSYEP) provides robust summer employment opportunities with structured learning and development offerings to more than 1,300 MBSYEP program participants between the ages of 14 to 24. Specifically, the agency offers participants two tracks: The first track teaches career skills, such as radio broadcasting; fashion design; modeling; studio engineering; and film/video editing. The second track provides hands-on job readiness training through direct support of summer camp operations as summer camp aides, aquatics aides, junior roving leaders, office aides, and operational aides. Both tracks provide teens and young adults with valuable occupational and leadership skills to build a strong, self-reliant foundation for future success.

In closing, DPR is committed to providing District youth with world-class recreation facilities and summer programming. Through this programming, the agency responds to community needs by directly addressing negative influences and providing services that engage youth in positive character building experiences. Through these experiences, participants develop important leadership, occupational, and inter-personal skills that will serve them their entire lives. And throughout the entire process DPR ensures that the participants engage in safe, fun, and educational activities that reflect the Mayor’s goals of building a safer and stronger city.

That concludes my testimony today. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering any questions that you or the Committee might have.