



August 5, 2020

Director Kim Johnson
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Urgent Request for Temporary Waivers for Recreation Parks Child Programs

Dear Director Johnson,

We, the undersigned collectively represent the breadth of municipal recreational and park services provided by both city and county departments, as well as independent special districts. Our members have been steadfast during the COVID-19 crisis to meet the moment. Our members have been providing not only the open space for mental and physical health of Californians, but to the subject of this letter, child and youth programming that is desperately needed for working families.

It is in these unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic we have seized the opportunity for local communities of California to pull together to better support the needs of the citizens they serve. As school districts across the state prepare for distance or modified learning this fall, their local special district, city, and county partners stand ready to continue to help to provide child and youth day and after school programs and services and distance learning support for the families they serve.

Recreation and park districts and departments operate affordable afterschool programs to help serve the needs of working families. As it currently stands however, our ability to serve the needs of our communities and essential worker parents is severely limited by the restrictions on the hours of operation of our public recreation programs. A broader temporary expansion of the current exceptions to licensed childcare programs would suspend daytime operating hour limitations and permit public recreation programs during school hours to help fulfill the needs of school districts and working parents alike.

Park and recreation districts were created, in part, to fill childcare needs in a meaningful way. With the sudden increase in demand for childcare, some recreational programs have seen dramatic increase in demand for a safe place for their children. By expanding the hours of operation for these programs the state can help meet the urgent demand of school districts and working families.

We respectfully request that the Department use its authority to grant waivers under the Governor's proclamation of March 4, 2020 to temporarily dispense with the limitation on Recreation and Park programs to only operate outside of those hours traditionally considered to be school hours, found in California Health and Safety Code § 1596.792(g)(1) and the limitations on total hours per week and the total weeks as found in Section 1596.792(g)(1) subparagraphs (A) and (B) and Section 1596.792(g)(2).

By providing a broad, statewide temporary waiver for public entities that are already providing programming and facilities for our working parents, and expeditiously informing all recreation and parks service providers how to take advantage of such a waiver, more spaces and programs will be available to help parents and local government to meet the moment during this crisis.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent request. We look forward to working with the department on this important matter. Please contact any of the signatories below with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Anthony Tannehill
California Special Districts Association



Matthew Duarte
California Association of Recreation and Park Districts



Stephanie Stephens
California Park and Recreation Society



Derek Dolfie
League of California Cities

CC: The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Tam Ma, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Newsom
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency
Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
The Honorable Jim Wood, Chair, Assembly Health Committee
The Honorable Richard Pan, Chair, Senate Health Committee
Pamela Dickfoss, Deputy Director for Community Care, Department of Social Services