



**New York City Council Committee on Parks & Recreation**  
**Wednesday, April 26, 2023**  
**Oversight Hearing – Public Swimming Pools**  
**Sherrise Palomino, Director of Advocacy and Programs**

Good afternoon, my name is Sherrise Palomino, and I am the Director of Advocacy and Programs at New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P). We are a founding member of the Play Fair for Parks Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify today. We thank the City Council Committee on Parks and Recreation for inviting us to speak about our city's recreation opportunities and centers. I also want to thank Chair Krishnan for his leadership and partnership in the Play Fair Coalition and for raising these important issues.

The NYC Parks Department operates and maintains 64 parks location with pools excluding 18 council district most in historically underserved communities. New Yorkers for Parks supports Intro 760. Swimming is a critical life skill and providing free access to children under 13 can help alleviate the racial inequity associated with swimming. 1 out of every 3 Black children cannot swim while 1 out of 10 white children can. By requiring a survey of sites owned by the city to be considered for new pools can address some of limited access and racial inequity that city is currently facing. The preconsidered bill will require the parks department to report about lifeguard staffing and other important data. These bills are important steps towards ensuring that NYC Parks can provide critical opportunities for youth development and empowerment with free swimming lessons that offer health and sports benefits. Creating more access to pools provide older adults opportunities to socialize and be active, which is essential to their overall well-being. Our parks department has been chronically under-staffed and resourced.

The time for now for transformative investment in our parks system – 1% of the city budget for parks could ensure that recreation centers are fully staffed and functioning to provide the programming that New Yorkers need. The NYC Parks department does a valiant job maintaining these aging resources but needs more funding to do so. This is one of the many reasons why NY4P and the Play Fair for Parks Coalition are calling for an increase in the Parks budget to 1% of the city's budget – a call that the majority of City Council Members support along with the Mayor.

*For over 100 years, [New Yorkers for Parks](http://www.ny4p.org) (NY4P) has built, protected, and promoted parks and open spaces in New York City. Today, NY4P is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods.*  
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