



**New York City Council Committee on Aging**

**Wednesday, March 23, 2022**

**Committee on Aging- Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**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 Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from across the five boroughs. Thank you to the Committee on Aging for the opportunity to speak about the value of our city's parks and recreation centers on seniors. I also want to thank Chair Crystal Hudson for her leadership. Members of this committee have a unique opportunity to push for adequate funding for our parks systems as it is a meaningful component of supporting NYC seniors.

The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that older adults get 30 minutes of moderate exercise 5 days a week. Our parks and recreation centers mean health equity access for seniors. Parks are critical infrastructure that should be a driver of social equity. Many nonprofit partners offer free programming and social services to seniors in parks and recreation centers.

The NYC Parks Department operates and maintains 59 recreation centers across the city to serve a population of over 1.1 million seniors. Of the 59 community board districts, 26 don't have a NYC Parks recreation center. These recreation centers provide critical opportunities for senior's physical and mental health and space for seniors to socialize and be valued. While NYC's recreation centers are essential to seniors' overall well-being and longevity; they are also chronically understaffed and badly in need of repairs, with roughly one third of them closed at any given time.

We are overdue 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 seniors and families alike need. This is one of the many reasons why NY4P and the Play Fair Coalition are calling for an increase in the Parks budget to 1% of the city's budget.

*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. [www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org).*