

Testimony of Erin Prangle, Softball Administrator
Montgomery County Little League
Opposing Delay of Phase II Blair H.S. Athletic Fields Renovation

Montgomery County Council Public Hearing
Agenda Item #9.5
February 9, 2021

Good afternoon.

Montgomery County Little League is opposed to the amendment which would delay Phase II of the Blair High School athletic fields renovation project. I urge you to oppose this amendment because our young athletes, especially girls and players of color, are in desperate need for this resource.

MCLL is a non-profit youth baseball and softball organization that has been in operation for over 15 years. Our league will support over 1300 players this spring, the overwhelming and growing number of which are from lower county. Our softball program participation has doubled in just one year and we expect similar growth in the future.

The greatest obstacle for us to provide playing opportunities is the lack of quality playing fields. The demands for diamond skinned softball fields far outweigh the supply. Girls softball, a developing sport, is far outnumbered by baseball and adult softball teams. As a result, girls are being squeezed out of playing opportunities because of systems in place that give priority to historic and existing program permits.

Yet girls, especially girls of color and those from low income families, need playing opportunities now more than ever. Studies show that girls and women who play sports have higher levels of confidence and self-esteem and lower levels of depression.¹ 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.² Studies also show that young athletes who have not been able to participate in sports during COVID face higher levels of depression and suicidal thoughts.³ 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.

Please oppose this amendment to delay the Blair High School renovation project and prioritize public health for our young people by sticking to your commitment to develop fields on time.

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¹ "Benefits - Why Sports Participation for Girls and Women." Women's Sports Foundation, 3 Oct. 2019, www.womenssportsfoundation.org/advocacy/benefits-sports-participation-girls-women/#:~:text=Girls%20and%20women%20who%20play,who%20do%20not%20play%20sports.

² Ibid.

³ Stubbs, Roman. "A Hidden Crisis: Suicide Among Teen Athletes Raise Mental Health Concerns." The Washington Post, WP Company, 16 Dec. 2020, www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2020/12/16/teen-athletes-suicide/?arc404=true.