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My name is Alex Chan and I am currently the Associate Director of Community Services for the [United States Tennis Association Mid-Atlantic Section \(USTA MAS\)](#), as well as a Montgomery County resident. USTA MAS is the nonprofit governing body of tennis in the region, promoting and supporting the sport in Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and a portion of West Virginia.

Our work is driven on creating more accessible and equitable opportunities for our youth to be active, create community and build character. Through this work and the support we provide to local nonprofits like the Montgomery County Tennis Association, Montgomery County Tennis & Education Foundation, and Metropolitan Tennis & Education Group, together we provide countless opportunities for Montgomery County residents to be active and create community through tennis.

While we see a number of youth sports identified for the Appropriation funding, tennis is not listed. **As a resident of Montgomery County and a representative of USTA MAS, I request that tennis be added to the program offerings by the Recreation Department serviced with Appropriation funding, as it is an ideal sport for youth and can have tremendous life-long benefits for those that participate.** USTA MAS can support the County's endeavors in growing youth sports and gender equity in youth sports with our effective tennis programs.

USTA MAS can be a resource to help incorporate tennis as an accessible, affordable and fun program offering for girls to participate. USTA MAS has extensive experience working with parks and recreation departments across the region, in Maryland specifically, on tennis programs and can provide the necessary technical expertise, curriculum, resources and more.

Tennis continues to surge in participation in the United States and in the Mid-Atlantic Region, especially given that it is one of the safest activities you can do during the pandemic. According to the Physical Activity Council's (PAC) participation report produced by Sports Marketing Surveys, which monitors more than 120 different sports and activities, across the United States more than 22.6 million people took to the tennis courts in 2021, up approximately 1 million players and 4.5% from 2020. In the Mid-Atlantic region, **tennis participation is strong with 1.3 million people reporting playing tennis in 2021 and 1.1 million people interested in playing tennis (age 6 and older).** In the OLO Report 2020-4 *Youth Sports in Montgomery County*, the anonymous online survey of parent-teacher association (PTA) members uncovered that tennis is one of the top two sports respondents would like for their children to play that they

have not played. With participation and interest in tennis surging and strong interest in the sport by county parents and caregivers, tennis should be on the list of sports to add to the program offerings.

In addition to interest and demand, tennis is an ideal sport that supports and enhances growth and development in youth physically, socially and emotionally. While benefits from tennis are numerous, here are a few to consider, especially as it relates to girls:

- **Physical fitness** with tennis include improved heart health and muscle development, agility and balance; brain functioning and focus; bone health and eyesight maintenance. Kids who play tennis are less likely to be overweight and learn physical skills that can keep them active for a lifetime.
- **Social health benefits** with tennis include less risky behaviors by youth tennis players such as underage drinking and smoking. Plus, tennis provides socialization opportunities and allows youth to have fun with their peers and make new friends. Tennis also develops character building such as honesty, teamwork, resilience and sportsmanship that translate off the court as well as on.
- **Emotional benefits** are significant with tennis. Children and teens have encountered a number of new and difficult experiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic and mental health issues have been exacerbated. Tennis provides an opportunity for youth to manage stress and channel adversity in a way that helps them find growth. Tennis players exhibit higher self-esteem than other athletes and non-athletes. Tennis also supports healthy development through cognitive challenges involved in learning and playing the game, as well as boosts self confidence through learning new skills.

USTA Mid-Atlantic is well aware of the research and statistics that shows girls are less likely to get involved and stay involved in sports compared to boys - causing them to miss out on the many significant benefits sports provide. This is why we have created a new instructional and educational tennis program, Girls Rule the Court™. This is a free program by USTA MAS for girls aged 7-13 designed to promote health, wellness, and build self esteem through tennis. Participants are provided equipment and the program is easily accessible taking place in schools as an afterschool program, as well as in partnership with park and recreation agencies. Currently, this program is being piloted in three locations in our region this year. A program such as this is something that USTA MAS and the Montgomery County Recreation Department can partner on to specifically address the issue of equity in youth sports, head-on. As noted on page 25 in the OLO report on gender equity, tennis is one of the female-dominated sports available that Montgomery families should have the opportunity to try. Our Girls Rule the Court program can be the ideal solution.

In addition to this program, USTA MAS has other youth tennis opportunities available that will make tennis a seamless and accessible addition in the County - from low-pressure introductory programs and team tennis to complete turnkey K-12 Physical Education tennis curriculum for schools - we can support girls with tennis through their entire youth and adolescence. Tennis can be conveniently offered in the County with a number of youth tennis programs easily

implemented in school or recreation center gyms or on flat outdoor spaces such as blacktops at schools using pop-up tennis nets. Tennis courts are also widely available, with 324 courts managed by Montgomery Parks and majority of them without any formal tennis programs being implemented. The county has several strong local nonprofit community tennis associations as well as support from USTA MAS to build out and assist with new programs. USTA MAS also has a program called Junior Team Tennis, which is administered as a league. This program can address the need for more sport leagues in the county. Lastly, USTA MAS has several resources (e.g. grants, scholarships, technical/business/marketing materials) we can provide to help make everything more accessible and reduce the barriers of entry.

With all the benefits and reasons presented in this written testimony, as well as the support of USTA Mid-Atlantic and community tennis organizers, we implore you to include tennis in the youth sports offerings being considered for the Appropriation funding. It is encouraging to see Montgomery County's investment in youth sports and efforts addressing the significant need for more opportunities for girls in sport. Tennis is the ideal sport to offer and can help the county reach their goals.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony. USTA Mid-Atlantic is ready to meet with the County to discuss tennis programming and implementation.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alex Chan

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410-979-6844

**Health Benefits References:**

- [Health Benefits of Tennis for Kids; USTA.com](#)
- [Mental Health Benefits of Tennis for Children and Teens, USTA.com](#)