

From: Stacie Somlak [mailto:staciesomlak@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, April 19, 2010 12:39 AM
Subject: City Council Public Hearing Testimony regarding Bill 15

Bill 15, Eliminating the Parks and Recreation programs, Summer Fun Program, Senior Programs and other community based enrichment programs has been proposed to be non-essential but I beg to differ. The average family needs and relies on the parks and recreation programs to create safe, positive activities for children and the elderly. I fear what will happen if these positive outlets are not available for kids. Most of us work one or more jobs and we need youth programs and the summer fun day care option. The cost will be great if our kids are hanging around, unsupervised, without good physical and mental stimulation. We've made the mistake to let furloughs happen in the public schools and the school enrichment programs have already been cut to the bone. Please don't allow the community based programs to disappear as well. Our youth need direction and encouragement and the recreation programs do so much good to create community minded citizens with high values, self discipline, physical fitness, and a belief in achieving goals and dreams. Leaving our youth in front of video games and the TV is not the answer for Hawaii.

You see the public sentiment over furloughs in the public schools and we are seeing that it is near impossible to undo the mistake now that it is in place and I can only imagine how much it is costing in public money to try to deal with the furlough mess. I fear the same will be true with recreation programs – it will be very costly and difficult to put the programs back in place once they are stopped, facilities shut down, and jobs eliminated. Administratively, how much will it cost to lay everyone off – shut down facilities, deal and pay for the opposition storm that will surely hit once the public realizes what the council has done, and what will the cost be down the line to try to get programs back up and running. It seems simple for you to say just stop and you get your budget balanced. But, it will not be simple and I would wager that when all is said and done, the savings will be a slight.

If you pass this, you will leave many of us high and dry without good options for our children. Personally, I rely on Summer Fun for day care activities for our 8 and 10 year old boys. The cost of private camps is much too high for us. We use the Kaneohe District park and pool regularly all year long. Both my boys are on the Kaneohe Swim Team and they practice every day at the pool. Kaneohe district park and gym is a thriving place, filled every day with people of all ages coming together for a wide variety of activities, sports, continuing education and enrichment. The parking lot is at overflow most of the time. We need our community center! There has to be another way without impacting the quality of life further for average families. These programs are our life line in struggling times.

Please do not do this- I beg you.

Sincerely,

Stacie Somlak
Kaneohe Resident

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