



Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform
of the Council of the City of Philadelphia

Friday, April 15, 2016, Room 400, City Hall

**Written Testimony of Ted Qualli,
Executive Director, Police Athletic League of Philadelphia**

Thank you Lieutenant Eddis. My name is Ted Qualli and I serve as the Executive Director of the Police Athletic League – a non-profit organization that exists solely to support a single unit of the Philadelphia Police Department and our mission of Cops Helping Kids.

With a Board of Directors of more than 100 business and community leaders and a civilian staff of 21, we work to provide the resources and support necessary for the men and women of the PAL Unit to do what they do best – mentor, guide, and support Philadelphia children in the safe confines of their local PAL Center.

This is an exciting time for PAL as we are in year one of a five-year strategic plan that is aligned with the goals of the City. In short, we are working to serve more children, in more PAL Centers, for longer periods of time, and we are enhancing our programs to produce measureable impact on crime, character, and education.

I would argue that the PAL Police unit is the premier youth serving organization in Philadelphia and that we are uniquely positioned to partner with the City to address the significant issues we are discussing today.

While simply opening a PAL Center in a neighborhood does not immediately translate into a drop in crime, the relationships developed by the police officer with the kids, their parents and the larger community can and do.

I would welcome the Committee to visit the Harrowgate PAL Center in Kensington where a former Recreation Center that was largely forgotten and underutilized five years ago has been transformed into a thriving community hub that is filled with volunteers and kids. Wawa has a team of volunteers on hand twice a week reading to children, helping with homework and playing sports. Social workers regularly stop in to observe children on their caseload, and youth from the Philadelphia Youth Advocate program spend time four days a week with Officer Rivera as part of their mentoring program. The Department of Recreation supports PAL and helps make this possible through their provision of the building, and PAL – through the non-profit – covers the annual maintenance, programmatic, and operating expenses.



PAL's ability to promote safe communities is unique among youth-serving providers and we are poised to do even more.

In support of our plan, we have increased our summer programming budget by \$31,000 this year. This represents a 35% increase over last year's summer programming budget and will make a real difference in what we are able to do for and with PAL kids and teens this summer.

Over the next five years, our new strategic plan calls for growth on every front. We aim to open seven new PAL Centers, increase our enrollment from 15,000 to 20,000 children and to double the average number of youth attending our centers on a daily basis (from 1,200 to 2,400).

Success will be evident in the transformative effect that PAL has on the lives of highly-engaged youth. Our ambitions are to more than double the number of youth annually who have such transformative relationships with PAL, from 2,500 youth today to 6,500 annually by 2019.

To be successful, we will need support from inside and outside the organization. The PAL Board of Directors is motivated to drive this plan and has stepped up in many ways already from increasing their personal and corporate annual giving to galvanizing resources to support our efforts. One example is a bi-lingual public service campaign airing now aimed at increasing enrollment which has already led to more than 2,500 new children being enrolled in PAL since September.

Josh Harris, Managing Owner of the 76ers has made a significant impact on our organization over the past two and a half years – first providing the funding to develop a strategic plan and then providing financial support to help us build the capacity to deliver on the plan. This support has helped us implement a state-of-the-art metrics program which will allow us to measure our impact and use data to inform and improve PAL programming. It has also provided for additional support staff to help the police officers in the delivery of programs across the network of PAL Centers.

Simply put, we are poised to scale our presence across the City, but the pace of expansion is limited by two primary factors: adequate facilities and available funds to build and sustain the transition we envision.

1. **Facilities:** finding adequate facilities is a major challenge. For a PAL Center to be effective, we need a full-size gymnasium, an office and a classroom or two. Finding these facilities in the neighborhoods where PAL is needed most is challenging.

We have more than \$750,000 in identified, and unmet capital needs across our current centers. As we add centers and grow, we aim to upgrade existing facilities and when



appropriate, seek out new facilities to meet our growing needs. To paraphrase the Mayor, PAL kids shouldn't feel like second class citizens because of their ZIP Code.

2. Funding: as the non-profit side of PAL, our job is to ensure the police officers have every tool necessary to deliver best in class programming and to be the safe, consistent and caring presence PAL kids deserve and need.

We have an aggressive and diverse fundraising plan which will require a sharper focus on corporate donors, high-net-worth individuals, private foundations, and support from public Out-of-School-Time funders such as Philadelphia's Department of Human Services.

The Mayor's Office and City Council have been supportive of our efforts to find facilities and we are hopeful that together we can open and sustain PAL Centers in the neighborhoods they are needed most.

In closing, the Police Athletic League of Philadelphia is part of the solution, and we stand ready to partner and support the City in its efforts to create safer neighborhoods and reduce the burden on the criminal and juvenile justice systems.