



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

October 29, 2019

Muriel Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
Executive Office of the Mayor
1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor,

Last week, the Committee on Recreation and Youth Affairs held a public roundtable on use of the field at Jelleff Recreation Center. More than 100 witnesses testified at that roundtable, and one key takeaway was the need for more outdoor space to serve that community—including the students at Hardy Middle School, users of Jelleff Recreation Center, and the residents of Burleith. One option that has been proposed is activating the existing Duke Ellington Track and Field for public use.

The Ellington field is one of only a handful of District-owned green spaces in the Burleith neighborhood. The field is only a few blocks from Hardy Middle School and Jelleff Recreation Center and is large enough to accommodate both sports practices and after-school programming. Despite this potential, the field is underutilized, primarily serving as a running track and unofficial dog park. We believe that the Ellington field, if put to full use, could address at least some of the need for field space at Hardy, Jelleff Rec, and for other area athletic programs.

To be ready for regular use by students and the public, however, Ellington Field would need to undergo significant renovation. Although technically part of the Duke Ellington campus, the field was not renovated as part of the school's modernization; in fact, the field's last renovation was in 2010. In addition, although Georgetown University paid to resurface the field's track in 2016, the track is only 320 meters long—80 meters shy of regulation length; ideally, any renovation would include a regulation-size track. Finally, as noted above, for a number of years the Ellington field has been used as an unofficial dog park. Any renovation of the field should consider how to continue to accommodate this community use.

With this need in mind, we are writing today to request your help to expedite readying the Ellington field for public use. Although this renovation could be incorporated into the FY 2021 budget, waiting for the budget to act would mean delaying these efforts until October 2021,



at the very earliest. We would like to work with you, the Deputy Mayor for Education, and the Director of Parks and Recreation, to begin planning for renovation of the field now. It is our hope that these plans can include identifying funds available to start this work prior to the start of FY 2021.

To that end, we have several requests. First, we ask that you expedite transfer of custody of the Duke Ellington Track and Field from DCPS to DPR; this transfer will ensure that the field can be put to full and best use, once renovated. After that transfer is completed, DPR and DGS should schedule community meetings to discuss renovation of the field and hear from the community about interest in particular improvements. Finally, where available, funding should be reprogrammed or otherwise budgeted to support the planned renovation.

We look forward to learning more about your plans for activating the Ellington Field, and any other plans to increase access to field space for student athletes, after school programs, and residents in the Burleith community. Where it would be helpful, we are happy to schedule a meeting to discuss the recommendations above and plan next steps.

Regards,



Mary M. Cheh
Councilmember Ward 3



Elissa Silverman
Councilmember At-Large



Trayon White, Sr.
Councilmember Ward 8



Anita Bonds
Councilmember At-Large



Robert C. White, Jr.
Councilmember At-Large

Cc: Delano Hunter, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation
Cc: Paul Kihn, Deputy Mayor for Education
Cc: Dr. Lewis Ferebee, Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools
Cc: Ruth Wattenberg, President, State Board of Education