

MAR 13 2013

SENATE RESOLUTION

ENCOURAGING THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION, CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU, TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC PLAYGROUND THAT ALLOWS VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN TO FREELY EXPLORE THEIR ENVIRONMENT AND INTERACT WITH THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS IN A SAFE, WELCOMING, AND DEVELOPMENTALLY ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT.

1 WHEREAS, for over one hundred years Americans have
2 recognized the physical, emotional, and cognitive benefits of a
3 well-equipped playground; and

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5 WHEREAS, the concept of "playgrounds" as dedicated sites
6 and structures where children may safely grow to understand the
7 meaning of cooperation emerged in industrial Europe, where
8 public streets had become too dangerous, and most backyards too
9 small, to accommodate the vigorous games children use to expend
10 energy and develop skills; and

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12 WHEREAS, after German primary schools pioneered a
13 playground system, Manchester, England, opened the first public
14 playground in 1959, and America dedicated its first public
15 playground in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park in 1887; and

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17 WHEREAS, the social skills children develop through free
18 and spontaneous play of the sort that occurs on playgrounds
19 create lifelong skill sets carried forward into adulthood,
20 rendering playgrounds among the most formative environments for
21 child development outside the home; and

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23 WHEREAS, as a child navigates the physical and social
24 environment, learning to climb, swing, balance, and communicate
25 with minimal supervisory interference, physical mastery and
26 self-development allow confidence to emerge; and

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28 WHEREAS, research repeatedly confirms that physical
29 activity during childhood produces health benefits with lifelong
30 ramifications including reduced risk of psychological problems,
31 ameliorated disease risk factors, weight optimization, the



1 attainment of peak bone mass, and enhanced self-esteem to a
2 degree determined by quality of play; and

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4 WHEREAS, in 2011 approximately 60,000 children under the
5 age of eighteen were categorized as legally blind, and an
6 additional 460,000 suffer from severe vision difficulties; and

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8 WHEREAS, "legally blind" is defined as visual acuity of
9 20/200 or less in the best eye and a visual field no better than
10 twenty degrees, and "vision difficulty" is defined as serious
11 trouble seeing even when wearing optical corrective devices,
12 according to the Annual Report from the American Printing House
13 for the Blind; and

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15 WHEREAS, in Hawaii specifically, 1.2 percent of the
16 population is currently eligible for Blind and Disabled
17 Supplemental Security Income as of 2013; and

18
19 WHEREAS, to safely play at a fundamental level of
20 independence, blind children require playground design
21 accommodations such as ramps, detectable warning tiles, rubber
22 surfaces, bucket swing seats, railings, crawl tubes, and
23 entertaining ground features; and

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25 WHEREAS, each year emergency departments in the United
26 States treat over 200,000 children under the age of fourteen for
27 playground-related injuries, and seventy-six percent of those
28 injuries occurred in public parks; and

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30 WHEREAS, the Consumer Product Safety Commission
31 investigated one hundred forty-seven playground-related deaths
32 between 1990 and 2000, and forty such deaths from 2001 to 2008;
33 and

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35 WHEREAS, medical costs of playground injuries to children
36 fourteen and younger exceed \$2,000,000,000 annually; and

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38 WHEREAS, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title III,
39 was passed in 1990, stating that no individual may be
40 discriminated against upon the basis of disability with regards
41 to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services,
42 facilities, or accommodations of any place of public
43 accommodation, and this measure took effect in July of 1992,



1 from that time forward requiring the compliance of all newly
2 constructed public facilities; and

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4 WHEREAS, a truly inclusive playground ensures that children
5 of multiple abilities can play together, not simply alongside
6 one another; and

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8 WHEREAS, progressive recreation managers realize that
9 playgrounds must offer more than the bare minimum requirements
10 set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act, which merely
11 allow wheelchairs to reach play equipment or provide disabled
12 children a single accessible swing per set; on the contrary, an
13 inclusive playground ensures that all children, regardless of
14 ability, can develop a sense of mastery and involvement across
15 the total environment; and

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17 WHEREAS, while the benefits of inclusive playgrounds to
18 blind children are obvious, sighted children also gain from
19 interacting with their visually-impaired peers, for inclusive
20 play teaches young people about challenges and lifestyles unlike
21 their own, thus allowing sighted children to grow into more
22 informed, compassionate members of their broader communities;
23 and

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25 WHEREAS, not one county throughout Hawaii currently
26 provides its public with a playground inclusive to the blind
27 community specifically or to the disabled community in general;
28 and

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30 WHEREAS, nearly every other state and territory in the
31 nation has designed, or has made plans to design, at least one
32 inclusive playground for some segment of the disabled community;
33 and

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35 WHEREAS, only six other states - Alaska, Maine, Montana,
36 Nebraska, New Mexico, and Wyoming, likewise fail to offer a
37 single dedicated playground to disabled children; now,
38 therefore,

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40 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Twenty-seventh
41 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2013,
42 that the City and County of Honolulu is urged to seriously
43 consider the establishment of an accessible public playground
44 that allows visually impaired children to freely explore their



environment and interact with their families and friends in a safe, welcoming, and developmentally enriching environment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Department of Accounting and General Services, Honolulu City Council, Mayor of the City and County of Honolulu, and Honolulu City Clerk.

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