November 22, 2016

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of the State of Washington
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

RE: Requesting that you adopt the recommendation to include $12 million in your 2017-19 Capital Budget for the Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) competitive grant program

Dear Governor Inslee:

We are writing to respectfully urge that you support a recommendation coming from your Recreation and Conservation Funding Board to allocate $12 million toward the Youth Athletic Facilities (YAF) competitive grant program in the 2017-19 Capital Budget you transmit to the Legislature.

An investment of $12 million in the YAF is an investment in healthy communities. It is an investment in our youth, and in giving them access to playfields that give them their first ‘gateway’ access to the outdoors. It is an investment in economic development. And it is a critical tool for our local parks and recreation agencies, helping them to develop, maintain, and renovate outdoor athletic fields, including the installation of all-weather fields in a state that needs such fields to offer year-round play.

Governor, the importance of programs such as YAF cannot be overstated. The President’s Council on Fitness has found that only one in three children are physically active each day, and children now spend more than 7½ hours a day in front of a television, video-game, or computer screen. And yet, the benefits of getting kids – and adults – onto fields where they can play and exercise is undeniable. Outdoor play combats obesity and is a proven antidote to help all of us prevent heart disease and diabetes and manage the likes of back pain, asthma, and arthritis.

In late 2014, Governor, the Outdoor Recreation Task Force that you assembled recommended a $12 million funding level for the YAF, and the Legislature responded by allocating $10 million toward this important program in its 2015-17 budget.

Hearing into the 2017-19 Capital Budget, the RCFB has again recommended a $12 million allocation for the YAF, and the competitive grant and letter-of-intent processes administered by the Recreation and Conservation Office have demonstrated a tremendous need for the program. Nearly two-dozen agencies entered the competitive grant round for YAF in May 2016 that resulted in recommended
funding of over $4 million; and, in a subsequent letter-of-intent process that will help RCO ‘size’ a supplemental grant round in either 2017 or 2018, there were 132 applications for over $30 million, with projected matches of more than $85 million for a total leveraged investment of over $115 million.

The demand for fields through programs like YAF is also as high as it has ever been. Along with more traditional sports such as soccer, baseball, and softball, we are seeing record levels of participation in the likes of lacrosse, cricket, ultimate Frisbee, and more. All of them require fields that are developed and maintained in local communities.

Finally, Governor, when we invest in programs like YAF, we do several things that are clearly in the state’s interest:

- We provide access and an outlet to the outdoors for our youth, particularly those from diverse and lower-income communities who need a free place to play;
- We help people of all ages stay active and healthy and fight obesity, health issues, and disease;
- We enable year-round play in a state where inclement and unpredictable weather precludes such opportunities on regular grass fields;
- We provide economic development and revenue opportunities for communities to use fields to draw tournaments and group play that brings visitors into our beautiful state – visitors who spend money at our restaurants, in our retail outlets, and in our hotels.

In closing, Governor, we again urge that you honor the RCFB’s recommendation for a $12 million level of funding for YAF to honor the outdoor access, recreation, healthy-community, and economic development benefits of this program. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Al Vorderbrueggen, President Elect  Terry Fisher, CEO
Washington Recreation & Parks Association  Washington Youth Soccer
Director, Spokane Parks and Recreation

Andrea McNamara Doyle, Executive Director  Steve Tammaro, CEO/President
Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition  YMCA of the Inland Northwest

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Peter Mayer, Vice President
Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials
Boys & Girls Club of WA
Deputy Health Director, Snohomish Health District

Victor Colman, Director
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition
Shon Sylvia, Interim Executive Director
Metro Parks Tacoma

Peter King, CEO
Association of Washington Cities
Paul Kundtz, Northwest Director
The Trust for Public Land

John Stokes, Mayor
City of Bellevue
G. Todd Vanek, Mayor
City of Colfax

Will Ibershof, Mayor
City of Duvall
David Baker, Mayor
City of Kenmore
Amy Walen, Mayor
City of Kirkland

Don Anderson, Mayor
City of Lakewood

Sean Guard, Mayor
City of Washougal

Pat McCarthy, County Executive
Pierce County

Paul Simmons, Director
Olympia Parks, Arts, & Recreation

John Spencer, Mayor
City of Lake Stevens

Jill Boudreau, Mayor
City of Mount Vernon

Frank J. Kuntz, Mayor
City of Wenatchee

Pam Bissonnette, Interim City Manager
City of Mercer Island

Lori Cummings, Director
Everett Parks and Community Services
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Jeff Elevado, Director
Bremerton Parks and Recreation

Rick Still, Director
Tukwila Parks & Recreation

Nancy Backus, Mayor
City of Auburn

Soo Ing-Moody, Mayor
Town of Twisp

Dave Somer, Executive
Snohomish County

Terry Ryan, Council Chair
Snohomish County

Brian Sullivan, County Vice Chair
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Dan Popp, President
Washington Youth Soccer Foundation

Murray Vince, Secretary
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Rob Erickson, Treasurer
Washington Youth Soccer Foundation
Kurt Reuter, Director
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Matt Watkins, Mayor
City of Pasco

Jeff Wagner, Mayor
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