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**Testimony Before the NY City Council Parks Committee on the Proposal to
Lease 80% of Randalls Island Fields Exclusively to Private Schools
November 3rd, 2006**

My name is Patrick Sullivan and I am a father of two sons in public school. Until I read Patrick Arden's October 11th article on this subject, I had no experience of activism and had never been inside City Hall. Today, I am a District Captain for the public school advocacy group Class Size Matters and the person behind the email address AllKidsNeedFields@hotmail.com.

I have reached out and asked parents to write the Mayor and Parks Commissioner to voice their objections to this proposed contracts. Let me quote from some of the letters:

I am against the proposed use of Randall's Island athletic fields to a consortium of 20 private prep schools for 30 years. I hate to think this plan was supported by City Hall and am appalled that this could EVER be a consideration.

I am the mother of a very bright 13 y/o 8th grade boy. As my son and I tour public high schools, this arduous process is further complicated by the fact that many of the academically rigorous schools have limited athletic programs (if one exists at all) due to lack of available facilities. For a child as active and athletic as my son - no sports or limited sports can be a real "deal breaker" in prioritizing school preference.

Please DO NOT support this contract. Rather support the development of a full range of quality services to PUBLIC school education.

- Kathy Yates, Parent, Manhattan

I urge you to reconsider giving private schools exclusive rights to the Randall's Island, and perhaps consider how to make this public space accessible to all children during school hours, and to all of New York City's families at all times. With such limitation of space in schools, and with such overcrowding in our city, rendering Randall's Island a haven for the affluent is just not right. Thank you, I hope that your sense of fair play and concern for our children override what may appear to be an economic solution.

- Parent, Manhattan

As a parent of a former PSAL football player for the Harlem Hellfighters, I ask that you do not sell the majority of after-school and weekend hours to private schools. It is SHAMEFUL that private schools have had a majority of these hours in past. It is even MORE SHAMEFUL that the current 30-year negotiation on the table calls for 80% of time said time for private schools.

I call on you to take the high road and support the mayor in his efforts to make public education in NYC the BEST IN THE WORLD. The best school systems are not just made of bricks and books. Support educating the whole individual, especially our male youth who attend public school. You can do this by dividing after-school and weekend hours at Randalls Island equally, based upon the number of high school students in public and private high schools in Manhattan and Queens.

This is your opportunity to make a difference for the majority, not the well-healed minority. I'll be interested, as will other parents of children attending public schools, what percentage of after-school and weekend hours you will reserve for public school use for the next 30 years.

- *Parent, Manhattan*

Parks Department officials argue our kids should be happy because they will have 189 hours of access after school instead of the 27 they currently have. But they don't explain why private school kids would have 786 hours a week for 30 years with a no-bid contract. Is this really the only way to finance this park?

Parks Department officials argue that these fields are too far for the public to use. When Central Park was built, it too was too far for the public to reach easily. But the creators of that park did not bar the public or sell exclusive access. The people who built Central Park were big people with vision who knew a great city would need great parks. Today our leaders are small people who have no vision.

New York City is renowned for great public parks. All its citizens deserve access to these resources. The Parks Department's cynical plan to sell off the athletic dreams of public school kids is no way to fund the building of new parks. All kids need fields.

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