



**Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams before the Hearing of the
Committee of Parks and Recreation
February 22, 2021**

I would like to thank the Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation, Peter Koo, for the opportunity to testify today. In 2018, I called for the position of sports czar to be created at the highest levels of City government to oversee school and youth sports and the infrastructure that supports those programs. The survey of Brooklyn schools I conducted in 2018 shows that many schools still lacked dedicated gym space. To rectify this, chronic permitting issues, as well as the lack of coordination to address the challenges of school and recreation sports, a high-level, dedicated sports czar will be integral. I support Intro 1959-2020, which would create the Mayor's Office of Sports and Recreation that could be staffed by such a czar. I believe such an office would be the ideal place to manage the critical need for youth athletic space across New York City.

Physical education is not an elective that is nice to have — it is a critical component of a child's physical and mental well-being. The programming must be equitable, and the infrastructure must be accessible for all children to reap the benefits. We cannot afford to have the various City agencies involved working at cross purposes, or even to be off on their timing. We need one office to oversee and ensure both access and equity are not dependent on gender, income, race, or ZIP code.

Of the 307 schools our office surveyed, only 130 had dedicated gym space. Many used random space in the building for sports, such as cafeterias. This is unacceptable. Public spaces across the city can help alleviate the problem until a more permanent solution can be found. Those same spaces are critical to local youth sports programs, which often serve those same students without access to sports teams or leagues.

This effort requires the coordination of multiple agencies on multiple fronts. It cannot be left to individual efforts by each agency working in silos. It must have the oversight and coordination deserving of such an important undertaking. Our children and communities need this infrastructure to be functioning in the most beneficial way possible. That can only happen if there is one office accountable for their management.

Thank you.