

Cherelle Hill - Executive Director - DMV PAL – Senate Bill 463 SUPPORT Testimony

You may know PAL as the “Police Athletic League,” and sports may come to mind, but we are so much more. PALs in communities create safe havens for youth and law enforcement officers to build community and meaningful relationships. PALs are a channel in which barriers are broken down and bridges are built, but they are nothing without the people themselves. Through our work at DMV PAL, we have seen communities bettered as a result of engagement in the program. Have you ever seen a group of high school students in one of the toughest cities in the country use art as a tool of self-expression and form of release? At DMV PAL, we have. We have seen young men of color learn tools, such as meditation and mindfulness, to combat stressors in their lives and environments. We have seen youth on the autism spectrum push past limitations others have set and find the power of their voice. We have seen youth express their frustration with the current state of the country and the world and create beautiful works of art out of unfortunate situations. We have seen youth learn the meaning of community and the importance of paying it forward, by being able to provide a basic necessity, food, and words of encouragement, for the less fortunate. PAL is a place where no dream is too big, no voice goes unheard, and no child is forgotten. Throughout the pandemic and this very unprecedented time in history, DMV PAL has been able to provide for our families and ensure our youth and their families have what they need to not only survive, but thrive. We are more than an after school program. As we like to say in PAL, “Once a PAL kid, always a PAL kid,” and at DMV PAL we are a family. Having grown up in PAL myself, I know firsthand the positive impact PAL has had on my life and I hope kids all across the state and the world have the opportunity to grow in PAL. I am in full support of this bill that will help to ensure families are given the same opportunities to thrive, no matter their background, socioeconomic status, creed, gender, or race.

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