



OMAR R. BENJAMIN
Executive Director

July 25, 2012

Mr. Robert E. Doyle
General Manager
East Bay Regional Park District
2950 Peralta Oaks Court
Oakland, California 94605

Subject: Support for the East Bay Regional Park District Community Transformation Grant (CTG) application

Dear Mr. Doyle:

On behalf of the Port of Oakland, I am pleased to support the East Bay Regional Park District's application for a Community Transformation Grant (CTG).

One of the key elements which make the East San Francisco Bay area a healthy and vibrant place to live is the tremendous asset of the East Bay Regional Park District. With 112,000 acres of accessible parkland, 1,200 miles of trails and thousands of education, recreation and interpretive programs – the District plays a critical role in both the physical and mental wellness of our region, as well as providing a substantial health and quality of life benefit

The District's facilities and programs improve our region's economic competitiveness by providing low-cost, safe outdoor activity opportunities in an urban environment. Connecting the District's role in our community with schools and health care providers will help reduce health care costs for employers, address chronic diseases before they happen, enhance the quality of life for residents, and provide schools additional resources and promotional assets – all of which further bolster business and worker recruiting efforts for our region.

Over the years, the District has supported the international *Healthy Parks, Healthy People* (HPHP) initiative – the only regional or local government to do so in the United States. In support of HPHP, the District proposes to lead a multi-sector collaborative – the Get Outdoors! (GO!) Network for Healthy Kids in order to further strengthen the relationship between health, education and outdoor activity providers. The GO! Network brings together the Oakland Unified School District, West Contra Costa County Unified School District, Alameda County Office of Education, Children's Hospital in Oakland, the U.C. Berkeley Center for Weight and Health, and EcoVillage (a regional non-profit focusing on sustainable, healthy food and nutrition). This well-rounded collaborative uniquely addresses the CTG strategic directive number two – *Active Living and Healthy Eating* – in the impacted communities of Oakland and Richmond, California.

The GO! Network has several key components. It embraces the Full Service Community School and District model, a model which promotes schools as sites to holistically meet student, family and community needs. This component will implement **Parks Prescription** strategies to train teachers and school district staff in the health related value of outdoor activity, and, importantly, where there are opportunities to take advantage of regional park related activities.

The GO! Network also seeks to promote and institutionalize the model California **Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights** (COBOR) – a statewide resolution which recommends ten outdoor activities every child has the "right" to experience before the age of 14. Included in this component is the District's third grade *Kids Healthy Outdoors Challenge* curriculum – a thoughtful approach for teachers to implement the concepts of COBOR by ensuring they align with curriculum standards.

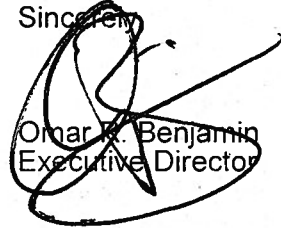
The GO! Network will also shed light on **transportation and policy barriers** which can literally keep kids from experiencing the outdoors. The District and its' partners will work with other stakeholders to address those challenges. Ultimately, the GO! Network will provide a concrete example of a truly **transformative, replicable model** to promote outdoor activity, increase communitywide awareness of opportunities to move outside, fund collaborations and reduce park access barriers.

Currently, the District's facilities are used by 14 million visitors a year. Expanding the District's reach into our education and health care communities will further enhance the wellness and health of the East Bay, particularly in the urban corridors of Oakland and Richmond where families have limited safe outdoor options.

Finally, the District is a model public agency in the East Bay which successfully links communities together in a manner that has the regional interest at its core. The District is financially sound and has significant local matching funds of its own, as well as existing partnership with schools and health care providers in our area. As an independent Special District with an elected Board, the District works with all 33 cities and towns in the region, as well as with businesses, non-profits and other government agencies to ensure stakeholders are invested in their success.

Supporting the GO! Network for Healthy Kids will serve as a model and catalyst for regional wellness and livability, and I am pleased support this proposal.

Sincerely,



Omar W. Benjamin
Executive Director