



2025 Washington State **Play Equity** Legislative Agenda

The King County Play Equity Coalition, made up of more than 120 organizations, envisions a county and state where all youth—and particularly youth of color and those from historically underserved groups—experience the **transformative benefits of play, sports, outdoor recreation, and physical activity.**

To advance that vision we seek policies, programs, and funding at the state level that focus on **increasing access to sport, play, and outdoor recreation** as a means to address the mental, emotional, and physical health challenges of youth, increase social connectedness, and help prevent youth violence.

Legislative Priorities & Intentions

1 Advance Green Community Schoolyards:

Purpose: Make policy change and invest capital funding to increase community access to publicly owned land through a Green Community Schoolyards Act for health, environmental, and economic benefits.

- Designate schools as community hubs in statute.
- Establish a model policy that is supportive of schools as community hubs.
- Provide financial incentives for school districts to adopt model policies.
- \$10 million for the Recreation & Conservation Office to distribute to Community Schoolyards capital projects in communities of color/underserved communities.

2 Improve Safety, Quality, and Equity in Youth and School Sports:

Purpose: More than half of youth in Washington state are engaged in school athletics or youth sports, yet sports are virtually unregulated leaving youth vulnerable to abuse, injury, and low quality offerings; many youth also lack access to sports. High quality youth and school sports support academic engagement and school attendance, promote resiliency and physical health, and serve as a protective mechanism against anxiety and depression. We urge the creation of a Commission to explore how the state can invest in, support, and protect youth athletes.

Commission objectives should aim to:

- Expand access to youth and school sports for all communities:
 - Increase investment in youth and school sports through statewide funding so that its physical and mental health benefits are available to all youth regardless of zip code, income, ability, race, or gender.
 - Example: In Illinois, the legislature has provided \$13 million over the last three years to youth sports organizations as a means for investing in violence prevention.
 - Example: In New York, proceeds from mobile sports betting provide ~\$5 million/year to youth sports.
- Ensure safety through monitoring, accountability, and oversight:
 - Require state-level tracking of coach abuse and misconduct by OSPI, WIAA, and other governing bodies.
 - Create a state board that conducts audits and reviews of youth sports organizations for compliance with safety and coach training standards.
 - Example: Colorado recently enacted a bill to protect youth athletes from abuse by holding organizations accountable for background checks and safeguarding training for all coaches.
- Professionalize and train school-based and youth sports coaches:
 - Investigate mechanisms for a state-level youth and school coach certification focused on youth development, mental health, and social emotional well-being including amending RCW 28A.600.200 to include coach training requirements in WIAA’s purview.
 - Example: In Ohio, all school-based coaches are required to take a state-accredited mental health training.

3 Recommit to Community Outdoor Athletic Fields:

Purpose: Return \$32 million in funding in the Community Outdoor Athletic Facilities fund intended by Washington voters to support youth athletic fields in under-resourced communities but re-allocated by the legislature in 2023 to fund minor league baseball stadium improvements

