



City of Austin

**Gregorio "Greg" Casar, Council Member
District 4**

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September 15, 2016

Mr. Andrew O. Moore
Director, Youth & Young Adult Connections
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
National League of Cities
1301 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 550
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Moore,

As the City of Austin's designated representative to the National League of Cities, I am writing to express my support for the City of Austin's Cities Connecting Children to Nature Implementation Plan. The extensive research and highly collaborative strategic planning process conducted over the last six months ensures that children's equitable access to nature will be a top priority for the City of Austin and our partners.

Enthusiasm and commitment to this mission was readily apparent throughout the planning process. With representatives from the Mayor's Office, City Council, ten city departments, two school districts, the University of Texas, Dell Children's Medical School, and dozens of nonprofits, this initiative helped build and strengthen relationships across departments and sectors that had not existed previously.

I firmly believe that these partnerships and the collaborative efforts of the plan will help Austin achieve these long-term outcomes:

1. Every child has abundant and equitable access to nature at their home, neighborhood & school.
2. Every parent, health professional and teacher knows and understands the importance of access to nature for a child's healthy development. And every child considers outdoor play a top option for free time.
3. City codes and school curriculum are designed to allow and encourage kids to play outside in nature more frequently.
4. Austin is seen as an innovator and leader in the Children in Nature Movement.
5. Kids choose nature.

Focusing on greening school yards and creating a new network of school parks will help Austin provide daily access to rich nature environments for tens of thousands of students across the city and strengthen communities with access to new park space. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute to this burgeoning national movement and continue to strengthen relationships with the schools in my district.

My office looks forward to the implementation process and continued collaboration and information sharing with National League of Cities, the Children and Nature Network, and the six cohort cities as we discover new and better ways for city leadership to institutionalize equitable nature access. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this planning initiative and look forward to making our plan a reality for all children in Austin.

Sincerely,

Greg Casar
Council Member
City of Austin, District 4