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June 27, 2019

The Awesome Spot Playground Team
Valley Mountain Regional Center
P.O. Box 692290
Stockton, CA 9526

RE: Congressional Support of the Awesome Spot Playground at Beyer Community Park

I am writing to express my support for the development of Awesome Spot Playground at Beyer Community Park in Modesto, CA. The Awesome Spot Playground is a park for children on the autism spectrum and those with moderate to severe sensory processing disorder. Children with special needs are often excluded from playgrounds due to the lack of proper equipment that can accommodate their needs. The Awesome Spot Playground tackles this problem by creating a place where children can play freely and without judgment, regardless of cognitive and physical ability.

The Awesome Spot Playground is designed to be a socially inclusive and sensory integrated play space specifically created to break down barriers that keep family and friends from participating in play with one another. Parks that are intended for children with special needs are beginning to be developed across the country. Unfortunately for the residents of my district, the closest special needs park is several hours away in Palo Alto, CA.

Modesto is located in Stanislaus County, where there are few resources outside of the education system that provide a safe space for children with disabilities to explore, learn, and play.

According to KidsData.org, 12.6 percent of children in Stanislaus County were enrolled in special education classes in 2018. Providing a space of inclusivity for these children in our county will have a lasting impact on their lives.

Inclusive playgrounds such as Awesome Spot provides the opportunity for socialization and promotes active play that can help children with special needs develop and improve their problem solving, communication, and motor skills. The design of this play environment

accommodates to the needs and abilities of the child, encouraging independence, full participation, and equality of play opportunity for all children.

I fully support the development of the Awesome Spot Playground and commend the efforts of those who are working to make this space a reality. If you have any questions, please reach out to me or my Office's Grants Manager, Briana Gonzalez at Briana.Gonzalez@mail.house.gov

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Josh" on top and "Harder" below it, slightly overlapping.

Representative Josh Harder