



Legislation Text

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File #: Res 0469-2024, Version: \*

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Res. No. 469

Resolution to recognize May 15 as International Water Safety Day.

By Council Members Krishnan, Hanif, Farías, Brooks-Powers and Gutiérrez

Whereas, International Water Safety Day brings awareness to the epidemic of drowning and educates children and adults about how they can become safer in, on, and around the water; and

Whereas, According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is the leading cause of death for children ages one to four and the third leading cause of unintentional injury death for children over the age of four in the U.S.; and

Whereas, For every child who dies from drowning, another seven experience non-fatal drownings that require emergency care and can result in long-term health problems, including brain damage and disability; and

Whereas, Approximately 4,000 unintentional drowning deaths occur annually in the U.S., and 58 people drowned at New York City (“NYC” or the “City”) pools and beaches between 2008 and 2022; and

Whereas, There are disparities in drowning, as Black Americans drown at rates nearly one and a half times higher than their white counterparts; and

Whereas, Recognition of International Water Safety Day could encourage more New Yorkers protect themselves from drowning by engaging in water safety practices, such as improving swimming ability and wearing a life jacket; and

Whereas, Formal swimming lessons may prevent childhood drownings by as much as 88%; and

Whereas, Although knowing how to swim can prevent drowning, nearly one in six U.S. adults cannot swim, and, according to the 2017 NYC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, more than a quarter of all New Yorkers,

and more than a third of Black New Yorkers, cannot swim; and

Whereas, Wearing a life jacket may prevent one in two drowning deaths by recreational boaters, according to a study published in BMJ medical journal; and

Whereas, Out of the approximately 533 recreational boaters whose drowning was reported by the U.S. Coast Guard in 2021, 83% were not wearing a life jacket; and

Whereas, NYC is committed to improving water safety and providing swimming education, which may prevent drownings and mitigate historical inequities concerning water safety instruction and access to the City's pools and beaches; and

Whereas, In 2023, the NYC Council passed Local Law 129, which requires the Department of Parks and Recreation ("DPR") to offer free water safety instruction to second grade students enrolled in NYC public schools, and Local Law 132, which requires DPR to conduct a survey of city-owned sites suitable for the construction of additional public swimming pools, develop a plan to open pools under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education for public use, and require DPR to offer free swimming lessons at DPR-operated pools; and

Whereas, In part due to these local laws, the City provides free swimming instruction to approximately 30,000 New Yorkers annually; and

Whereas, Not-for-profit organizations that operate in NYC, including the YMCA, offer free and reduced-price swimming instruction for children and adults; and

Whereas, Organizations such as the Swim Strong Foundation, an NYC-based 501(c)(3), have offered water safety programming on International Water Safety Day, including swimming classes and CPR training and certification; and

Whereas, The New York State Assembly is also committed to improving water safety, as evidenced by the adoption of Assembly Resolution No. 2182, introduced by Assembly Member Karines Reyes, which calls on the Governor of New York to proclaim May 15, 2024 as Water Safety Day; and

Whereas, Recognition of International Water Safety Day could help mitigate the City's acute lifeguard shortage by encouraging more New Yorkers to complete the Municipal Lifeguard Training Program to apply to work as a lifeguard at the City's pools and beaches; and

Whereas, Lifeguard supervision reduces the incidence of drownings, as data collected by the U.S. Lifesaving Association show that only one drowning occurs per 4,832 rescues at beaches with on-duty lifeguards and approximately 75% of drownings at lifeguarded beaches occur during hours without lifeguard supervision; and

Whereas, Despite the importance of lifeguard supervision, the City is only on track to hire approximately 70% of the lifeguards needed to staff the City's beaches over summer 2024, which may reduce the number of hours that certain beaches are open and decrease access to a safe swimming environment for millions of New Yorkers; and

Whereas, More water safety education, as well as a more robust lifeguard workforce pipeline, provided in association with International Water Safety Day, could help New Yorkers safely enjoy the City's pools and beaches and reduce drownings; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes May 15 as International Water Safety Day.

AGB  
LS# 16962  
06/04/24