



VIA FAX AND U.S. MAIL

Mr. Tim Gorbach, Chairman
Parks and Recreation Board President
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Re: Membership policy at Cuyahoga Falls Natatorium

Dear Mr. Gorbach,

According to news reports, Cuyahoga Falls city leaders are considering whether to expand the types of families who may access discounted memberships at the city's natatorium. I urge you to strongly consider this policy change and ensure that Cuyahoga Falls maintains its reputation as a welcoming city for all Ohio residents.

Community pools have a long tradition as an important place where residents may congregate, discuss issues in their community, and allow families to develop bonds with one another. While the city has not directly prevented some people from utilizing the natatorium, the decision to give special family discounts to only male-female married couples with children closes the door to many couples living in the Cuyahoga Falls area.

It is important to recognize that not all families are comprised of a married husband and wife and their biological children. Families come in all shapes and sizes. It is not the government's place to define what is or is not a "family." To do so is discriminatory and sends a poor message to those children whose families do not fit into the city's narrow definition. Families with single parents, two non-married parents, grandparents with guardianship over their grandchildren, and blended families with stepparents are only a few of the types of families shut out by the city's narrow policy.

We recognize that the city attempted to address some of these issues with policies such as the "Guardian + 1 child" plan. However, the policy still leaves many families out, and continues to label some families as something other than what they are: a family.

Cuyahoga Falls' policy leaves the city woefully behind other cities and states. Some Ohio cities, such as Cincinnati, have passed laws that prohibit owners of public accommodations from discriminating based upon marital or familial status. City

recreation centers in Akron and Medina recognize families as any relations residing together in the same household, and allow those families discounted memberships. Such policies are commendable given that in today's society the definition of family has become increasingly diverse. These policies have also been implemented without creating any conflict with state laws governing what marriages shall be legally recognized.

In today's world, it is important that communities be seen as welcoming of families of all shapes and sizes. Businesses all around the world recognize that they must be inclusive in order to attract and retain talent who enrich their work. If Cuyahoga Falls is viewed as unfriendly towards some types of families, businesses and skilled workers may be less likely to relocate into the community.

I sincerely hope city officials will create a policy that is fair and inclusive for all of Cuyahoga Falls' families. If you have any additional questions or wish to discuss this further, you may contact me at (216)472-2220 or contact@acluohio.org.

Sincerely,



Christine Link
Executive Director
ACLU of Ohio Foundation

Cc: Don L. Robart, Mayor
Mark Ihasz, Council President
Paul Janis, Law Director
Bill Lohan, Parks and Recreation Superintendent