

IAPD Opposition to OSLAD Sweep in Amendment No. 2 to SB 1805

The Illinois Association of Park Districts strongly opposes the provision of Amendment No. 2 to SB 1805, the FY 2021 Budget Implementation bill, **which sweeps 100% of dedicated OSLAD funds for the FY 2021 OSLAD grant program.**

For more than 30 years, the OSLAD grant program has been one of the State's most successful programs and has more than paid for itself.

While IAPD recognizes the State's general revenue shortfall, it is shortsighted public policy to sweep dedicated OSLAD funds that would help generate future state and local revenues, create jobs, and support local communities by aiding park districts in their delivery of essential services.

By making a modest investment of these dedicated capital funds, OSLAD construction projects help leverage additional local dollars through the 50% local matching requirement, which guarantees the State twice the return on its investment.

OSLAD projects also help generate much needed state and local revenues by stimulating the economy through immediate job creation and the purchase of supplies and materials. Once completed, the projects generate additional state and local tax dollars by promoting tourism and other activities.

While we understand the magnitude of this crisis, investments of dedicated OSLAD funds will help the State meet some of its challenges. As just one example, OSLAD funded-facilities are used in communities throughout Illinois to provide afterschool and summer programs for working families.

During the last budget crisis and in past economic downturns, park districts experienced an even greater demand on their facilities, programs and services by working families for this afterschool and summer care as well as programs and services for seniors, persons with disabilities and others as many nonprofits were forced to scale back or close their doors. We are already seeing signs that the same will be true again.

OSLAD projects help park districts support the State by meeting the demand for these essential services, and while the State benefits greatly, it does not have to bear the future burden or cost of maintaining those facilities or programs.

Illinois' local park system, which OSLAD helps fund, has played a critical role during this pandemic as one of the only sanctuaries where citizens can promote their physical and mental health and well-being. The pandemic will likely exacerbate the need for additional parks and open space as people spend more time outdoors and socially distance, and the demand for OSLAD grants before the pandemic already exceeded available funding. During the last cycle, there were 130 applications totaling \$43,458,850 (1.5 times the \$29 million available).

For these reasons and many more, it is shortsighted to sweep funding from a successful program like OSLAD that makes economic sense and produces positive, long-term results for the State, particularly when the program will help mitigate some of State's budget problems in the long run.

Please oppose this shortsighted sweep of dedicated OSLAD funds in Amendment No. 2 to SB 1805.

Respectfully submitted,

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Illinois Association of Park Districts