



103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

HB1526

Introduced 1/31/2023, by Rep. Sonya M. Harper

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act
30 ILCS 105/5.990 new

Creates the Outdoor Rx Program Act. Creates the Outside Rx Program. Authorizes the Department of Public Health, subject to appropriation, to make grants for outdoor environmental, ecological, agricultural, or other natural resource-based or outdoor-based therapy programs serving the citizens of the State of Illinois. Requires the Department to establish an advisory committee to assist and advise the Department in the development and administration of the Outdoor Rx Program, including developing the form for an application for receipt of a grant. Provides that the Department shall set priorities and develop criteria for the awarding of grants to natural resource-based or outdoor-based therapy programs. Provides criteria for grant eligibility and selection. Provides that the Director of Public Health shall make the final decision on funding a program. Amends the State Finance Act. Creates the Outdoor Rx Program Fund as a special fund in the State treasury.

LRB103 25794 CPF 52144 b

1 AN ACT concerning health.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Outdoor Rx Program Act.

6 Section 5. Intent. Studies have shown that time outdoors
7 can be a valuable adjunct therapy in addition to more
8 traditional health care, while also reducing reliance on
9 prescription medication. The therapeutic benefits of time
10 spent outdoors is clinically proven and known to help reduce
11 stress, improve concentration, and promote overall well-being,
12 both physical and mental. Natural resource-based and
13 outdoor-based therapy programs, including adventure therapy,
14 wilderness therapy, horticultural therapy, walk-and-talk
15 therapy, and other nature-oriented programs, are currently
16 being used by mental health professionals and are shown to
17 have benefits, including, but not limited to, reduction of
18 stress, restoration of attention, and an improved sense of
19 well-being. Such outdoor programs aim to connect people with
20 nature, thereby proving to be particularly beneficial to
21 individuals undergoing a recovery process. Recognizing the
22 healing benefits of natural resource-based or outdoor-based
23 therapy programs to residents of the State, particularly

1 veterans and individuals recovering from substance abuse or a
2 physical or mental trauma, the General Assembly supports the
3 establishment of an Outdoor Rx Program.

4 Section 10. Definitions. In this Act:

5 "Department" means the Department of Public Health.

6 "Director" means the Director of Public Health.

7 "Fund" means the Outdoor Rx Program Fund.

8 Section 15. Outdoor Rx Program; Department rules.

9 (a) Subject to appropriation, the Outdoor Rx Program is
10 created to provide grants for outdoor environmental,
11 ecological, agricultural, or other natural resource-based or
12 outdoor-based therapy programs serving the citizens of the
13 State of Illinois. The Department shall establish, implement,
14 and administer the Outdoor Rx Program to provide grants for
15 natural resource-based or outdoor-based therapy programs.

16 (b) The Department shall adopt any rules necessary for the
17 implementation and administration of this Act.

18 Section 20. Advisory committee.

19 (a) The Department shall establish an advisory committee
20 to assist and advise the Department in the development and
21 administration of the Outdoor Rx Program. The advisory
22 committee shall consist of at least 7 members, appointed as
23 follows:

- 1 (1) at least one member, appointed by the Director;
- 2 (2) at least one member, appointed by the Director of
3 Natural Resources;
- 4 (3) at least one member, appointed by the Director of
5 Veterans' Affairs;
- 6 (4) at least one member, appointed by the Director of
7 the Environmental Protection Agency;
- 8 (5) at least one member of the business community,
9 appointed by the Director;
- 10 (6) at least 2 members of an outdoor organization,
11 appointed by the Director; and
- 12 (7) any other members the Director deems necessary to
13 ensure a representative cross section of participants.

14 (b) The advisory committee shall develop an application
15 form that eligible applicants shall complete and submit to be
16 considered for a grant under the Outdoor Rx Program.

17 Section 25. Outdoor Rx Program Fund.

18 (a) The Outdoor Rx Program Fund is created as a special
19 fund in the State treasury. Moneys deposited into the Fund
20 shall be used solely for the administration of the Outdoor Rx
21 Program. The Department may accept gifts, grants, donations,
22 or moneys from any source for deposit into the Fund. Any public
23 agency in this State may use moneys in the Fund, subject to
24 approval by the Director under subsection (c) of Section 35,
25 to develop and implement natural resource-based or

1 outdoor-based therapy programs. The Department may award
2 grants to public agencies and contract with any public or
3 private agency or person to develop and implement natural
4 resource-based or outdoor-based therapy programs under the
5 Outdoor Rx Program.

6 (b) The Department shall establish limitations on the
7 availability and use of Outdoor Rx Program moneys. However,
8 any limitations shall be defined in the application package,
9 and the Department shall establish the limitations only after
10 considering the following:

11 (1) consistency with the purpose of the Outdoor Rx
12 Program, as stated in subsection (a) of Section 15; and

13 (2) availability of moneys.

14 (c) The Department may require applicants to make a
15 matching contribution to be eligible for a grant under the
16 Act.

17 (d) The Department may limit the amount of funding
18 available for any element of natural resource-based or
19 outdoor-based therapy programs.

20 (e) The following conditions are placed on the use of
21 moneys from the Fund:

22 (1) For every funded program, a contract shall be
23 executed on behalf of the Department and by the grant
24 recipient. The grant recipient shall not be reimbursed for
25 costs incurred prior to the execution of the contract by
26 both parties.

1 (2) The grant recipient shall ensure that all natural
2 resource-based or outdoor-based therapy programs are in
3 accordance with any technical standards established by the
4 Department.

5 (3) The grant recipient shall submit any reports
6 required by the Department as directed in the funding
7 contract.

8 (4) The grant recipient shall agree to and certify
9 compliance with all applicable federal and State laws,
10 rules, regulations, and policies.

11 (5) The grant recipient shall maintain accurate
12 accounting records on the expenditure of program moneys,
13 provide the Department with such records consistent with
14 the agreement or upon request, whichever is applicable,
15 and permit the Department to audit the use of moneys in
16 accordance with generally accepted audit practices and
17 standards. The Department shall reserve the right to
18 terminate its participation in any program that fails to
19 perform according to the requirements of this Act.

20 (f) The Department may assess fees to grant recipients or
21 Outdoor Rx Program participants for Outdoor Rx Program
22 services.

23 (g) Moneys in the Fund shall be expended only for natural
24 resource-based or outdoor-based therapy programs approved by
25 the Director. To the extent practicable, the Director shall
26 ensure that all moneys received during a fiscal year are

1 expended prior to the end of that fiscal year.

2 Section 30. Eligibility criteria; applications;
3 evaluation.

4 (a) The Director shall set priorities and develop criteria
5 for the award of grants to outdoor environmental, ecological,
6 agricultural, or other natural resource-based or outdoor-based
7 therapy programs considering, at a minimum, programs that:

8 (1) use veterans for at least 50% of the program's
9 implementation or administration;

10 (2) contribute to healthy lifestyles through outdoor
11 recreation;

12 (3) will commit matching and in-kind resources;

13 (4) create partnerships with public and private
14 entities;

15 (5) maximize the number of participants who can be
16 served, particularly participants who are veterans or who
17 are recovering from substance abuse or physical or mental
18 trauma;

19 (6) use a State park, other natural venue, or
20 Department personnel as a resource;

21 (7) use research-based and effective environmental,
22 ecological, agricultural, or other natural resource-based
23 or outdoor-based therapy;

24 (8) provide citizens of the State of Illinois with
25 opportunities to directly experience and understand nature

1 and the natural world; and

2 (9) include ongoing program evaluation and assessment
3 and reporting of program effectiveness.

4 (b) The Director shall select activities eligible for the
5 awarding of grants. The activities may include, but need not
6 be limited to, the following:

7 (1) outdoor recreation;

8 (2) outdoor environmental studies;

9 (3) agricultural activities;

10 (4) natural resource-based activities;

11 (5) conservation;

12 (6) ecological activities; and

13 (7) stewardship or restoration.

14 (c) The following activities are ineligible for the
15 awarding of grants from the Outdoor Rx Program:

16 (1) activities that may be perceived to lobby or
17 advocate for political purposes;

18 (2) activities that are not in compliance with local,
19 State, or federal laws; and

20 (3) organized youth sports, such as a community league
21 or school team.

22 (d) The following criteria shall be used to evaluate
23 applications:

24 (1) proposals that provide for public or private
25 partnerships;

26 (2) proposals that provide for innovative ways to

1 increase the availability and use of outdoor recreation
2 facilities;

3 (3) proposals that show consideration for the
4 economics of installation or implementation to provide the
5 greatest cost-to-benefit ratio, for example, where private
6 parties contribute more than the minimum amount;

7 (4) proposals that commit matching and in-kind
8 resources;

9 (5) proposals that use a State park, other natural
10 venue, or Department personnel as a resource;

11 (6) proposals that contribute to healthy lifestyles
12 through outdoor recreation and sound nutrition;

13 (7) proposals that contribute to the statewide network
14 of facilities or programs;

15 (8) proposals that encourage community involvement;

16 (9) proposals that encourage sound environmental
17 practices;

18 (10) proposals that maximize the number of
19 participants who can be served;

20 (11) proposals that provide an opportunity to
21 experience the outdoors directly and understand nature and
22 the natural world;

23 (12) proposals that include ongoing program evaluation
24 and assessment and reporting of program effectiveness;

25 (13) proposals that make use of research-based and
26 effective environmental, ecological, agricultural, or

1 other natural resource-based therapy; and
2 (14) proposals that demonstrate innovative approaches
3 to outdoor-based therapy.

4 Section 35. Program selection.

5 (a) Completed applications shall be reviewed by the
6 Department to determine eligibility and shall be evaluated in
7 accordance with the purposes, eligibility requirements,
8 limitations, and evaluation criteria in this Act.

9 (b) The Department shall consult with and consider the
10 recommendations of the advisory committee and present final
11 recommendations to the Director.

12 (c) The Director shall make the final decision on funding
13 a natural resource-based or outdoor-based therapy program.

14 Section 40. Report. On or before February 1 of each year,
15 the Department shall issue a report to the General Assembly.
16 The report shall state how moneys from the Fund were used
17 during the preceding calendar year and shall include:

18 (1) the amount of money deposited into the Fund during
19 the preceding calendar year as the result of revenue
20 derived under this Act;

21 (2) the amount of money disbursed from the Fund and
22 the process used for such disbursements;

23 (3) recipients of grants from the Fund;

24 (4) the amount awarded to each grant recipient;

- 1 (5) the purposes for which grants were awarded; and
2 (6) a summary financial plan for Fund moneys, which
3 shall include estimates of all receipts and all
4 disbursements for the current and succeeding fiscal years,
5 along with the actual results from the prior fiscal year.

6 Section 90. The State Finance Act is amended by adding
7 Section 5.990 as follows:

8 (30 ILCS 105/5.990 new)

9 Sec. 5.990. The Outdoor Rx Program Fund.