

To: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Task Force

From: Milwaukee County Department of Health & Human Services, Aging and Disability Services, the Office of Persons with Disabilities, as supported by Milwaukee County Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Dated: February 23, 2023

Re: ARPA Request for Allocation under the Community Support, Other Social Determinants of Health

Please accept this request for an allocation of ARPA funds for much-needed facility improvement work for year-long programming in Milwaukee County for individuals with disabilities to support their health as well as to support equity within the County.

Background:

Persons with disabilities and their families are served through year-long programming, including summer programming, provided at the Wil-O-Way Underwood Park in Wauwatosa and the Wil-O-Way Grant Park in South Milwaukee facilities, through the County’s public-private relationships with the Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin, Inc., Easterseals, and Adult Day Services of Southeast Wisconsin, organizations. These programs ensure the health and safety of individuals with disabilities who do not have many options in our community to enhance health and recreation. The accessibility of these facilities also ensures that the facilities can serve as rental resources for families and community groups, enabling them to offer inclusive events and programming. These programs are consistent with the County’s vision and focus, as expressed in Chapter 108 of its ordinances, of promoting health and equity, including the fostering of “diverse public participation.”

The request for an accessible water feature—which would provide accessibility to wheelchair and other mobility-challenged individuals along with their non-challenged

peers—is to ensure that the health and wellbeing of individuals with disabilities is addressed. It is also to ensure the safety of participants, some of whom have to be physically placed in the pool to enjoy its features. The ADA specifically states that “no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the . . . facilities . . .or accommodations of any place of public accommodation.” 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a).

The timing of this request is particularly acute. The Spring season will see Easterseals seeking accreditation for its summer camp, so that individuals with State of Wisconsin funding may attend. That accreditation comes from the American Camp Association and requires a facility that meets accreditation standards for safety and access. The Summer camp serves individuals with disabilities aged 7-21, oftentimes individuals who have no other programming available to them. The Summer camp is scheduled to start in June. Following the Summer camp, programming will continue into the Fall season again for individuals with disabilities through Goodwill. Indeed, this facility is used year-round and any enhancements will be used (as weather permits) for programming in summer as well as other seasons.

While this Task Force may question the timing of this ARPA request, please know that advocacy for these necessary repairs and the requested improvement has been ongoing for over seven months. In July 2022, Director Michael Bonk of the Office for Persons with Disabilities, members of the Commission, a Milwaukee County Parks administrator, Easterseals administrators, as well as 2 County Board supervisors, visited Wil-O-Way Underwood to inspect the repair needs. Since that time, Commission members have been constant in their inquiries to address these needs. Only recently did we have access to the process for ARPA requests. The result is this combined request.

Specific Request:

Splash Pad at Wil-O-Way Underwood

Needs: (1) Accessible water feature for individuals with wheelchairs as current wading pool is not accessible, which will provide relief from weather and recreation; (2) Reduces current maintenance of wading pool

Support for Request: See letter from Michael Bonk, Director of Office for Persons with Disabilities (with photos) and bid information

Allocation Requested: \$500,000, with needs identified by Parks Department

This request is supported by the following materials:

- Letter from Michael Bonk, Director of Office for Persons with Disabilities, detailing work with County departments (including the Parks Department) as well as providing bid information
- Photos and video evidence from inspecting the Wil-O-Way parks
- Resolution from the Commission for Persons with Disabilities
- Emails or letters of support from Supervisors Johnson Jr. and Supervisor Vincent
- Support letters from Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin and Easterseals