



February 17, 2023

Dear ARPA task force:

I am the Recreation Program Manager with Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin. We currently hold the contract with Milwaukee County to provide Recreation opportunities for adults with disabilities and a six-week summer Camp for kids and adults of all abilities from age 7-21. We are passionate about leading the way to 100% equity, inclusion, and access for people with disabilities, families, and communities. It is necessary and vital to have parks that can accommodate all kids/adults of all abilities. The Wil-O-Way parks are there for just that! It is also just as important that these parks are safe, not only for the community who use this space but also for the participants of our Rec and Camp.

Easterseals is currently going through the process of getting accredited through ACA (American Camp Association). This will allow us to continue receiving funding with IRIS, and it shows the quality of our camp! With this we must meet standards that are above and beyond the state standards. One of the standards includes safety. There are several safety concerns that will NEED to be addressed before this season of camp. We have been working closely with the Office for Persons with Disabilities and the Wil-O-Way committee to get the following repairs and replacements taken care of before we have the tragedy of someone getting hurt or worse.

Bench replacements: The current benches have a coating over the metal. This plastic has started to peel and create a sharp edge. I have included a picture with this letter. This is capable of a significant injury which could result in the need for further treatment by professionals. Outside of the sharp plastic outer layer, there is exposed, very rusty metal.

ADA Ramp: We currently have a ramp at the back of the building so campers in wheelchairs can access the nurse's station. This ramp is made from wood and is literally falling apart. This is supposed to be a camp for people of ALL abilities. How can we offer a camp experience to a person in a wheelchair if they are not able to get into the nurse's station?

Fence Replacement: This "issue" is the MOST frustrating. There was a section of the fence between the park that was built for people of all abilities and the freeway taken down by the DOT to complete work. They did put some snow fence in the place of the panel. The replacement of this panel is essential for safety, again not only for our Rec and Camp programs but for the community. I can't even imagine the backlash if someone or a family pet was able to get on the FREEWAY from a place families think is safe and enclosed for their children and animals.

Last but not least, there is the matter of a splash pad put in where the wading pool currently stands. We believe a splash pad would be more beneficial to our programs and to the public. Children of all abilities are able to run, roll, and interact with a splash pad, whereas, while in a wading pool kids/adults are more or less laying in standing water. The wading pool requires constant management with chemicals and supervision. A splash pad wouldn't need as much and would be able to be used by the public,



outside of camp hours, because there is not the need for supervision in the same manner as the wading pool.

For all these reasons, we at Easterseals Southeast Wisconsin support the proposal by the Wil-O-Way committee to fund these needs with ARPA dollars so these “issues” can be addressed and fixed as soon as possible.

Thank you,

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