



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Chris Abele

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DATE: May 23, 2017

TO: The Honorable Milwaukee Board of Supervisors

FROM: Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

RE: County Board File No. 17-351 which earmarks tax dollars to Urban Underground

I am returning County Board File No. 17-351 unsigned. While I support the enriching of our urban parks with programming for youth, I do not support cherry-picking from many able non-profit organizations based on Supervisor relationships.

Preserving and enhancing our parks has been a priority of mine since taking office. Ensuring that our urban parks remain beautiful and fully utilized is especially important to me. The Sherman Park neighborhood is one of Milwaukee's best and Sherman Park is a County gem. Like all our parks, Sherman Park is at its best when it brings the surrounding community together, provides constructive play for youth, and adds to the safety and vitality of the neighborhood. For this reason, we invested \$2 million for a major renovation of the Boys and Girls Club in the park and another \$165,000 over three years for a Youth Career Development project manager to serve teenagers in the neighborhood. The people of Sherman Park deserve a park that lives up to the great character of the neighborhood it resides in, and the park deserves thoughtful investments.

Like all youth serving organizations, Urban Underground provides an important service to the community. To get the work going under the earlier resolution that earmarked funds to Urban Underground, we repeatedly contacted the organization to get basic information on its intended programming, budget, and outcomes as well as basic administrative documents necessary to effectuate a contract. None of the necessary documents were provided and, as a result, the funding lapsed.

As always, we will work to make sure that there is real, meaningful work done under this contract. We will also make sure the work benefits the people of Sherman Park and that taxpayers are protected throughout the process.

There are many great organizations in Milwaukee County who work on youth development, the need for quality work is great, and the resources available are scarce. The community benefits when organizations propose the activities and outcomes it seeks to achieve and engages community stakeholders for input and feedback to these proposals prior to obtaining scarce public resources.