



Illinois General Assembly

April 14, 2020

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor, State of Illinois
100 W. Randolph
JRTC- Suite 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601-3220

Dear Governor Pritzker:

While our state and nation are clearly facing unprecedented challenges that have necessitated a number of public policy and social distancing steps to protect the health and welfare of Illinoisans, we write urging you to re-open our State Parks and Trails for the BENEFIT of the health of all Illinoisans.

As you know, social distancing guidelines do not preclude enjoying outdoor recreation and exercise, the benefits of which contribute significantly to the physical, mental, and emotional wellness of Illinoisans in the communities we represent. Our State Parks and Trails are the “original destinations” for Illinoisans to social distance, exercise and engage in recreational opportunities that improve their wellbeings.

Illinois taxpayers have spent billions of dollars to not only preserve these natural recreational areas but also to market their benefits to Illinoisans’ overall wellness. The marketing has been effective, and we find our offices flooded with constituent contacts describing State Park and trail “wellness routines” interrupted, for seemingly little to no payoff to flattening the curve of infections of COVID-19 in Illinois. Indeed, as enthusiasts seek out new outdoor recreational opportunities to replace (hopefully temporarily) their enjoyment of our parks and trails, one could argue a resident is far more likely to stumble into public social interaction as they establish “new routines” at open parks and trails not operated by the State of Illinois.

State Conservation Police Officers are on duty and capable of protecting the safety of Park and Trail visitors. We encourage postings about social distancing and implementation of best practices. Since Illinois’ was the nation’s first State Park system to fully close, we are certain the leadership can also be the first to re-open with proper social distancing guidelines put in place and executed effectively. We are confident Director Callahan is up to the task of safely re-opening the Parks to the public. State Park and trail users tend to be a socially aware crowd. Assuredly, these users are up to the task of abiding by guidelines established to protect their safe rendezvous with our State’s natural resources.

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Please re-consider this decision, with common-sense as your holistic guide in this matter. We look forward to your prompt response to our request

Sincerely,



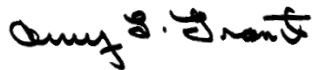
Rep. Tony McCombie
71st District



Rep. Avery Bourne
95th District



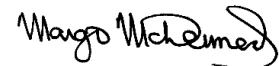
Rep. Terri Bryant
115th District



Rep. Amy Grant
42nd District



Rep. Norine Hammond
93rd District



Rep. Margo McDermed
37th District



Rep. Lindsay Parkhurst
79th District