

## ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DISTRICT OFFICE  
3202 W 26<sup>TH</sup> ST  
CHICAGO, IL 60623  
(708) 295-9159  
OFFICE@REPEDGARGONZALEZ.COM



SPRINGFIELD OFFICE  
260-W STRATTON BUILDING  
SPRINGFIELD, IL 62706  
(217) 782-2023

### **EDGAR GONZALEZ, JR.** STATE REPRESENTATIVE | 21<sup>ST</sup> DISTRICT

September 19, 2022

Dear Superintendent Escareño,

I hope this letter finds you well. I write to you at the behest of a community organization in my district, Únete La Villita, concerning the use of Douglass Park for large music festivals, as well as to follow up on the town hall you and your team conducted late August, as well as the proposed policy adjustment announced in the board meeting last week. This community engagement is extremely important.

In my youth in the early 2000s, I would go to Douglass Park regularly for *kermeses* and culturally relevant festivals. Event organizers would close Sacramento Boulevard for the duration of these events, and the park remained accessible.

Nowadays, the southern half of the park is almost fully fenced off for over 12% of the year for music festivals like Riot Fest, Heatwave, and Summer Smash. My neighbors and I only had Douglass Park as a green space in our end of the neighborhood because Piotrowski Park was too far away and La Villita Park was not built until many years later just a block from my house. Access to green space in the Southwest Side of Chicago is already lacking, and the existence of so many festivals exacerbates this issue.

Compounding the access to green space is the access to roads. Everyone is used to occasional road nuisances. I myself have experienced the casual traffic annoyance caused by the festivals. Although they may seem no different to those held in Grant Park, the presence of two safety net hospitals immediately adjacent to the park, Mount Sinai and Saint Anthony – the latter which is in my district – and the difficulty for ambulances to get through to the hospitals, exacerbates what is not only a public space issue, but a healthcare issue as well.

Additionally, when the festivals are done, although there is money allocated to repair the park after festival goers destroy park turf, the speed with which turf is repaired is incomparable to how quickly the fenced enclosure is assembled. Almost 12% of the year to be fenced off to the community seems excessive. Perhaps one festival or two might be agreeable to the community, or might have been, but insufficient community outreach has begot insufficient community input. The festivals are asking for forgiveness when they could have asked for permission.

With all this in mind, however, I would like to commend the Park District Board for the permit approval procedure it announced last week during the board meeting. This is a step in the right direction, contingent on proper outreach and advance notice. Absent that, I would like to echo the concerns of the organizations

who have signed on to the letter the board and other relevant parties should have received, and ask that we reconsider, if not outright remove, these festivals from Douglass Park.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Edgar Gonzalez, Jr.  
Illinois State Representative, House District 21