OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
MARTIN T. TULLY

April 29, 2015

Honorable Governor Rauner:

I am writing to you regarding the proposed FY15-16 State Budget that you recently presented to the General Assembly. While the Village of Downers Grove robustly supports your efforts to balance the State Budget, achieve financial sustainability, improve public infrastructure, and enhance public safety, the proposal to reduce the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) revenues by 50% would likely result in reductions to essential public safety services and public infrastructure projects, ultimately working against the goals of the proposed State Budget.

Cities and villages including Downers Grove are extensions of state government working as partners to provide essential services directly to state residents at a local level. We are responsible for providing many essential services that directly affect residents. We provide Police, Fire and Emergency Medical services responding to thousands of 9-1-1 calls every year. We are responsible for owning and maintaining hundreds of miles of streets and sidewalks. Local residents depend on the Village for these core services. The Village depends on LGDF revenue, which originates from income taxes paid by all state residents (including our local residents) and was intended to be proportionally returned to us to help pay for these local essential services and projects that the State cannot provide as effectively. Reducing our LGDF funding will negatively impact public safety services and public infrastructure projects.

The proposed 50% reduction of LGDF revenue would reduce Downers Grove's operating revenue by $2.4 million per year and would likely result in the elimination of staff positions including police officers, firefighters and public works staff. With these types of staffing cuts:

- Response times to 9-1-1 calls would increase,
- The number of public infrastructure projects completed such as street repairs would be reduced, and
- Snow plowing operations would take longer to complete.

Many people may think that a $2.4 million revenue reduction would not lead to cuts in core services. However, the fact is that reductions in these areas are imminent as recent cost saving measures have already significantly cut other services. There simply is not much left to cut in other areas. In 2008 the failing national economy reduced the Village's operating revenue by about $2.5 million. The Village responded by permanently eliminating 48 staff positions including eight police officer positions and three firefighter positions. In addition, we eliminated or reduced services including the DARE program, resident counseling services, a transportation program for our senior residents and community events.

To be sure, the Village of Downers Grove heartily supports your efforts to balance the State Budget, achieve financial sustainability, improve public infrastructure and enhance public safety. We also welcome the chance to work with your office and the General Assembly to accomplish meaningful, much-needed reforms in Illinois. However, we do not support the proposal to reduce the LGDF revenues. This proposal would reduce public safety services, public infrastructure projects and other key services valued by state residents of Downers Grove. In this regard, this proposal ultimately works against the goals of the proposed State Budget.

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Similarly, we completely agree that the State must cut spending and live within it means. But shifting LGDF funds from municipalities to plug holes in the State's budget is not a spending cut and does not fix the underlying problem. Instead, it merely shifts the problem from the State to municipalities who have already tightened their belts and made deep cuts due to the Great Recession. We urge the State to follow our example of increased austerity, instead of undermining our progress by redirecting revenues that have long been committed to municipalities to support essential local services.

Further, as part of any comprehensive state budget solution, the Village of Downers Grove urges you and the General Assembly to take steps to free Illinois municipalities from the 280 costly unfunded mandates with which they must comply, to remove barriers which inhibit collaboration and prevent consolidation between local units of government, and to protect municipal self-determination and local control.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin T. Tully
Mayor