



201 W. Lawrence Avenue
Springfield, Illinois
62704

**CLEAN WATER,
HEALTHY SOILS**

21 November, 2024

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor of Illinois
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Don Harmon
President of the Senate
327 Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable Emanuel Chris Welch
Speaker of the House
300 Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker, President Harmon, and Speaker Welch:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our urgent concern regarding the reduction of \$4 million in operational funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in the FY24 budget. This cut from the previous appropriation of \$8.5 million comes at a critical time when SWCDs are working tirelessly to address growing numbers of environmental concerns and expend significant federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) dollars within Illinois.

This funding reduction by nearly half will inevitably force SWCDs to reduce staff, jeopardizing the frontline infrastructure's ability to implement critical conservation initiatives. It is worth recalling the devastating loss of personnel less than a decade ago, when funding cuts led to layoffs and diminished program delivery capacity. We cannot afford to repeat this history, especially now, when the stakes are even higher.

SWCD employees serve as the critical infrastructure in every county, administering vital state and federal conservation programs. They are on the front lines of addressing pressing environmental challenges, including improving water quality, enhancing soil health, and building resilience to the increasingly severe impacts of climate change. Their work is



217.744.3414



info@aiswcd.org



201 W. Lawrence Avenue
Springfield, Illinois
62704

**CLEAN WATER,
HEALTHY SOILS**

foundational to achieving Illinois' environmental goals, and their presence on the ground ensures that these efforts reach the necessary scale.

This funding reduction threatens to undermine the capacity of SWCDs to deliver programs that support farmers, landowners, and communities across the state. Without adequate staffing, Illinois risks losing the ability to put federal IRA funds earmarked for conservation and climate resilience onto the ground in Illinois. Moreover, it puts at risk the progress we have made in addressing water quality issues, mitigating flooding, and improving soil sustainability.

We deeply appreciate your past support and partnership in championing natural resource conservation in Illinois. Thanks to your leadership, we have made significant strides in addressing our state's environmental challenges. However, maintaining and building on this progress requires sustained investment in the essential work of SWCDs.

We respectfully urge you to restore the \$4 million in operations funding for SWCDs in the FY25 Budget. Doing so will not only protect this critical infrastructure but also ensure that Illinois can leverage federal dollars effectively and continue making progress toward our shared environmental goals.

Thank you for your continued leadership and your commitment to the future of Illinois' natural resources. We stand ready to work with you to secure this critical funding.

Sincerely,

Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Soybean Association
Illinois Corn Growers Association
Illinois Environmental Council
The Nature Conservancy
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
American Farmland Trust



217.744.3414



info@aiswcd.org