

**Van Arkel, Matt**

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**Subject:** FW: Objection to Section 8.5.6.1 of Draft Procurement Plan

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**From:** Smith, Angela KD. <[akdsmith@sd129.org](mailto:akdsmith@sd129.org)>

**Sent:** Friday, February 25, 2022 12:19 PM

**To:** IPA.ContactUs <[IPA.ContactUs@Illinois.gov](mailto:IPA.ContactUs@Illinois.gov)>

**Subject:** [External] Objection to Section 8.5.6.1 of Draft Procurement Plan

Illinois Power Agency representatives-

Please consider this email our formal objection to section 8.5.6.1 which would limit the access of low income public schools to grant funding for solar projects. Schools serve the entire community and receive the support of all property tax payers. We should be allowed full access to funds which can help us not only continue to model what is best for our planet, but help to reduce operating expenses.

As a district serving 12,000 students with a low income percentage over 50%, access to these funds is critical. As evidenced by Illinois's efforts to address adequacy in educational funding, low income districts do not have access to the same support of our wealthier neighbors. As A Tier 1 district, without access to grant funding, we could not undertake these projects as we need to prioritize and protect our resources for classroom support. Grant projects such as Illinois Solar for All have been a game changer for us. West Aurora has been able to utilize the current Illinois Solar for All program to great success. We have six buildings with solar panels installed and anticipate they will help generate several hundred thousand dollars in utility savings over the next decade. We have plans to continue installing solar at additional school sites- including ground mount installations which will enable us to further embed sustainability into our curriculum- but have concerns that our projects will not receive funding if our access to grant programs is limited. Solar could become something that only those districts with the ability to fund projects themselves or through additional debt can take on. The fact that there is a separate pool for schools and that interest and demand is high from schools demonstrates the need is great. We should be increasing school district's opportunities to compete, not limiting them. We are asking to be allowed to make our case.

Schools should be allowed to be the leader in the state's sustainability efforts. We are uniquely positioned to support these projects, publicize these projects and expose our communities to the benefits of solar. Limiting our access to the funds available reduces the chance that districts will be able to take that leadership role. Our communities need to see what is possible with solar- taking on the challenges of climate change, technological advancements, new career possibilities, a brighter future. Without access to all available funding, low income schools will once again be forced to deal with limited opportunities for their communities. We strongly ask that you reconsider this proposed change. We are attaching a redlined copy which further details our specific concerns.

We are happy to speak with you in further detail or to provide any additional information.

Thank you.

Angela Smith

**Angela Smith**  
**Assistant Superintendent for Operations and CSBO**  
**FOIA Officer**  
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