



# Chicago Park District

## Legislation Text

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File #: 23-1012-0125, Version: 1

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### **AUTHORIZATION TO CHANGE THE GENERAL ADMISSION FEE FOR THE FIELD MUSEUM**

**To: The Honorable Board of Commissioners of the Chicago Park District**

#### **I. Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board of Commissioners adopt an order authorizing an increase in the general admission fees for the Field Museum. The proposed general admission fee increase is to take effect upon approval of the Park District Board. The museum has not increased its fees for Chicago residents since 2018.

#### **II. Explanation**

The proposed general admission fee increase is necessary to offset the unforeseen financial impact of the pandemic and rising inflation that has caused increased operating costs in areas such as utilities, wages and healthcare.

The Field Museum has over 40 million cultural items and scientific specimens in their anthropology, botany, geology and zoology collections. The Museum currently employs over 400 people with an expectation to increase the number of employees in 2023. Many of those employees work behind the scenes conducting original research using the Museum's collections and laboratories and in addition, undertake fieldwork around the world. They also provide training and mentoring opportunities for students many of them are from schools in Chicago.

In 2019, visitors from over 114 countries visited the Field museum which had a total of 1.3 million attendees. More than 90% of the Museum's public space is accessible to visitors for the price of basic admission, and the Museum regularly offers free and fee-based special exhibits. The exhibitions and learning programs connect audiences with nature and diverse cultures. Attendance in 2020 and 2021 was well below average at approximately 317,000 and 752,000 visitors, respectively.

The Field Museum despite budgetary challenges has maintained its educational partnerships with the students and teachers of Chicago as well as the entire State of Illinois. In 2019, the Museum hosted 123,000 teachers and students from Illinois as part of their free field trip program which represented approximately 10% of the total attendance and at a value of \$1.3 million. In addition, teachers have benefitted from educational opportunities provided by the Museum. In 2019, the Museum loaned classroom materials from their collection to teachers that have engaged over 54,000 Illinois students. During the pandemic, the Field Museum expanded its virtual and online resources that have reached over an estimated half million children and their families.

## II. Explanation (continued)

The Museum also provides internship opportunities to Chicago youth through After School Matters and the City of Chicago's One Summer Chicago program. The Museum's educators and scientists have partnered with the Park District in maintaining the longest stretch of lakefront nature area, the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. Youth Conservation Action programs provide Chicago students with hands on environmental learning experiences.

The Field Museum prioritizes access for community members, including those who are underserved through several free and discounted admissions programs. Beyond the 52 days of free basic admission offered to Illinois residents, the Museum grants free basic admission to Chicago Public Library patrons with a pass, Illinois teachers, active duty military and Chicago police and firefighters and a discounted fee for EBT and WIC cards. In 2019, more than 340,000 people visited the museum for free representing 25% of the attendance. In 2020, there were 157,000 free visits representing almost 50% of overall visits.

The following is a summary of the proposed general admission increase:

	<u>Current Admission Fee</u>	<u>Proposed Admission Fee</u>
Children under 2	Free	Free
Chicago Resident:*		
Senior/Student	\$15	\$18
Children ages 3-11	\$11	\$14
Adults	\$18	\$21
IL-Resident (non-Chicago):		
Senior/Student	\$24	\$25
Children ages 3-11	\$20	\$21
Adults	\$27	\$28
Out of State:		
Senior/Student	\$26	\$27
Children ages 3-11	\$22	\$23
Adults	\$29	\$30

*\*Basic admissions pricing for Chicago residents will be 25% to 30% less than non-Chicago, Illinois and out-of-state adult pricing.*

In reviewing the Field Museum's request we compared their proposed pricing structure with other museums in the Chicago area as well as other museums across the country and concluded that the proposed pricing structure would still be below or in line with other museums.

The Field Museum is an invaluable resource to the people of Chicago. Increased admission fees will help allow the museum to continue to provide world-class experiences for guests of all ages; therefore, we respectfully request the Board's authorization for the requested increase.