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Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
c/o Missy VanLanduyt
101 S. Webster Street
P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Ms. VanLanduyt:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written comments in addition to my verbal testimony at the DNR's 1/27/22 virtual hearing on the future of the Potawatomi Tower.

I strongly commend my many constituents who have been tirelessly advocating for the repair the historic 90-year-old Potawatomi State Park Observation Tower, an attraction distinctively built with an emphasis on tourism and economic development in mind, and after years of delays it is more imperative than ever that the DNR move swiftly to accept a plan for rehabilitation of the structure to allow that plans to proceed before deterioration leaves it is too late for the tower to be repaired. I have heard strongly and almost universally from area citizens, local governments, tourism and outdoor recreation advocates, and historic preservation volunteers (particularly the Sturgeon Bay Historical Society) in support of protecting and restoring this structure, and I have been working with Rep. Joel Kitchens to save this treasured landmark in a manner that preserves it for future generations.

The iconic Potawatomi State Park tower was targeted for demolition by the DNR in 2018 after the agency determined that the structure, which is now listed on both state and federal historic registries, was unsafe and would require a costly rebuild, rather than a less-expensive repair. I am pleased that after initial and repeated rejections from the Department from Secretary Preston Cole of my request to meet in the hope of reconsideration, the DNR has indicated a willingness to support some form of repair. I am discouraged, however, that the DNR subsequently withdrew its backing of the stamped architectural plans for Potawatomi Tower repair from a timber repair expert- plans consistent with the similar Mountain Park Watchtower repair authorized on Door County's Washington Island by the town government just this past year.

Promoting outdoor recreation and preserving our history is more important than ever, and the campaign to save the Potawatomi State Park Observation Tower is an example of public engagement at its best. As a member of the State Building Commission, I stand anxiously ready to support and continue engaging my legislative colleagues in support of authorizing repair plans brought forward by the DNR, hopefully promptly without any further delay. I would also be happy as a Building Commission member to work with the Department in incorporating additional accessibility features at Potawatomi State Park for individuals with disabilities. It is critical that action be taken now to repair the Potawatomi State Park Tower- while we still can. I hope that we will be able to enjoy the Potawatomi Tower for years to come.

Sincerely,

Senator André Jacque
1st Senate District