

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 16, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, United States House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader, United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to express our strong support for local parks funding and urge you to include a one-time, emergency investment of \$500 million for local parks in any future economic stimulus or infrastructure package as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted local parks services and employment, and looming budget cuts threaten cascading impacts. This year more than 56% of parks and recreation agencies have faced significant reductions to their current budgets¹ and additional cuts are expected. A recent National League of Cities report found that 71% of local governments planned to significantly cut future parks budgets noting regrettably, “cuts to parks and recreation services in particular will negatively impact economic reopening, as many families rely on local summer camps and programs for affordable childcare and youth enrichment during the summer months that likely will not be available.”² A one-time investment of \$500 million through an emergency Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program (ORLP) could preserve up to 100,000 at-risk local seasonal jobs, provide at least 8,000 new jobs, and renovate more than 500 sites, all while adding \$1.37 billion in economic activity.

Parks play an essential role in communities, employing 1.1 million jobs, generating over \$166 million in economic activity,³ providing critical emotional and physical health benefits, and bringing people together. This is especially true during the coronavirus pandemic as studies have shown visiting a park can lower stress while improving physical health, and parks are one of the few places where friends and family can safely gather.⁴

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, “Parks Snapshot: May 6-8 Survey Results” <https://www.nrpa.org/blog/nrpa-parks-snapshot-may-6-may-8-survey-results/>, 2020.

² National League of Cities, “What COVID-19 Means for City Finance” <https://covid19.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/What-Covid-19-Means-For-City-Finances-Report-Final.pdf>, 2020.

³ George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis and NRPA, “The Economic Impact of Parks” <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-summary-2020.pdf>, 2020.

⁴ The Trust for Public Land, “Parks and the Pandemic” <https://www.tpl.org/parks-and-the-pandemic>, 2020.

Funding for local parks would stimulate local job creation and economic activity. Parks create jobs while generating between \$4 and \$10 of economic activity per dollar invested.⁵

Additionally, a 2018 report showed that parks and recreation spending on operations creates 23 jobs for every million dollars spent and 16 jobs for every million dollars spent on capital improvements - comparable to that of roads and bridges.⁶

Local parks improve community health and climate resilience by managing storm water, mitigating flooding, absorbing air pollution, and filtering rainwater to keep rivers and lakes cleaner.⁷ Parks can also cool increasingly deadly “urban heat islands” as much as 7 degrees.⁸ The climate benefits that come from quality green spaces create more equitable benefits to communities across the country.

But not everyone has equal access to the outdoors. Across the country, 100 million people - including 28 million kids - do not have access to a park within a 10-minute walk of home.⁹ The quality of these parks is also not equal. Across the United States, parks serving primarily nonwhite populations are half the size of parks that serve majority white populations and five times more crowded.¹⁰ A one-time emergency investment to local parks would ensure that communities, regardless of income levels, have access to jobs and other benefits from local parks as the country emerges from this pandemic.

This emergency investment complements the recently signed into law Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) that fully and permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund. States face significant budget constraints due to Covid-19 and are under pressure to meet the non-federal match as designated under GAOA. An emergency investment in OLRP could alleviate the need for non-federal matches, be targeted towards underserved communities, prioritize shovel-ready projects, and provide health and wellness benefits to local areas. Congress has a long history of supporting our local parks in a bipartisan manner and we wish to continue this work by giving local parks the support they need in a time of crisis.

We urge you to prioritize an emergency allocation of \$500 million to support highly leveraged investments for top-priority close-to-home outdoor spaces and recreational opportunities in our

⁵ The Trust for Public Land, “Conservation Economics” <https://www.tpl.org/how-we-work/fund/conservation-economics>

⁶ George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis and NRPA, “The Economic Impact of Local Parks” <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/research/economic-impact-study-full-report-2018.pdf>, 2018.

⁷ American Society of Civil Engineers, “Urban Parks Infrastructure gets Congressional Spotlight” <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/urban-parks-infrastructure-gets-congressional-spotlight/>, 2020.

⁸ United States Environmental Protection Agency, “Learn About Heat Islands” <https://www.epa.gov/heatislands/learn-about-heat-islands>, 2020.

⁹ The Trust for Public Land, “Parks on the clock: why we believe in the 10 minute-walk” <https://www.tpl.org/blog/why-the-10-minute-walk>, 2016.

¹⁰ The Trust for Public Land, “The Heat is On” <https://www.tpl.org/the-heat-is-on>, 2020.

hardest hit neighborhoods any future economic stimulus. We thank you for considering our request and look forward to working on any future stimulus package.

Sincerely,



Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress



Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Deb Halaand
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/ Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

/s/ Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/ Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

/s/ Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

/s/ Jimmy Gomez
Member of Congress

/s/ Dianna DeGette
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress

/s/ Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/ Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

/s/ Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

/s/ Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/ Adam Schiff
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter Welch
Member of Congress

/s/ Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

/s/ Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

/s/ Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

/s/ Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

/s/ Albio Sires
Member of Congress

/s/ José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

/s/ Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

/s/ Jesús G. “Chuy” García
Member of Congress