



1777 Church Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
202.930.7430
www.cityparksalliance.org

August 31, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader, United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

For over 20 years, City Parks Alliance has worked on behalf of urban parks throughout the country to support the creation, revitalization, and sustainability of parks and green spaces that contribute to more vibrant and equitable cities. With almost 80% of Americans living in urban areas, this is a national priority; city parks make cities more livable, environmentally resilient, attract businesses and jobs, increase economic competitiveness, and create new revenue streams – all while saving cities billions on traditional environmental and civic infrastructure costs. The growth of many cities' population densities presents the opportunity to take a fresh look at community parks and their potential to help address critical urban infrastructure and public health issues. Leveraging the multi-functionality and collective community benefits of city parks has the power to meet countless economic, environmental, and social challenges facing metropolitan areas today.

As negotiations for the Budget Reconciliation Package commence, we strongly urge you to support city parks with adequate programming and funding. Inclusion of the Parks, Jobs, and Equity Act (H.R. 1678/S. 2258), which directs a one-time \$500 million investment to local parks through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program, would promote equitable access to parks and green spaces in underserved urban communities, decrease urban heat islands, and increase quality of life for more than 100 million Americans, including 28 million children, who currently lack accessible quality parks or green space. It will help achieve environmental justice goals by helping to close the nature equity gap. During the COVID-19 pandemic, our country experienced a renewed and deeper understanding of the important role parks and greenspace play for our physical and mental health, as well as our economy. Studies estimate that public park usage increased by 63% over the past year; despite this recent surge, city park budgets were cut and staff laid off. These trends demonstrate the need for the Parks, Jobs, and Equity Act to ensure that everyone can have access to a high-quality park in their city.

Furthermore, we ask that you prioritize programs supporting natural infrastructure and resiliency within the reconciliation package. While the Senate's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act increased funding for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF), we urge you to further increase this to \$8 billion per year in the reconciliation package. As the primary federal funding mechanism for green infrastructure projects, CWSRF is critical to mitigating current and future impacts of climate change; CWSRF's Green Project Reserve directly improves community resiliency by employing green stormwater solutions in city parks throughout the country. Increased resiliency is vital to mitigating the worst impacts of climate change while enhancing outdoor spaces and parks should be a part of this climate solution.

Finally, we support funding for the Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) in reconciliation. Participation in community-based workforce training and economic development fosters an important connection to local green spaces. By giving community members the opportunity to work preserving city parks, we can instill a passion for the natural spaces we love most in a new generation of Americans, all while building up local economies with CCC policies that prioritize a diverse and local workforce. We support the CCC's investment in fostering stronger communities and the next generation of environmental stewards.

Innovative investments in city parks strengthen communities by creating jobs, increasing property values, improving quality of life, and attracting the kinds of businesses, workforces, and private capital that make metropolitan areas competitive in today's global economy. City parks are critical infrastructure that require adequate federal investment to ensure equitable quality and access. They are a smart use of public dollars because they support urban systems that lead to stronger local economies, healthier people, and resilient environments. We urge Congress to recognize the enormous, multi-faceted benefits that city parks contribute to communities and individuals, and to prioritize federal funding for this in the reconciliation package. Our future depends on it.

We thank you for your continued work on reconciliation, and look forward to working with you to leverage the power of city parks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine Hazel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

City Parks Alliance

Cc: Chairman Sanders, Chairman Manchin, Chairman Carper, Chairwoman Murray, Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Yarmuth, Chairman Grijalva, Chairman Pallone, Chairman DeFazio, and Chairman Scott.