

January 22, 2020

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

CC: Department of the Interior Secretary

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We write to express our strong objection to the Department of the Interior's recent decision to unilaterally end the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program. On January 19th, the Department of the Interior and National Park Service released an order declaring that the department would divert funding from urban parks, blatantly disregarding congressional intent of the program.

ORLP grants are an important subset of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) that are designed to provide crucial funding to urban areas that lack local access to parks. In the short time the program has been in existence, it has funded nearly 50 projects that built or upgraded green spaces in underinvested communities. In fact, the program received a historic \$125 million for this fiscal year in the FY2021 Omnibus and COVID Relief and Response Act (P.L. 116-260).

Now, more than ever, the public is turning to the outdoors for the necessary emotional, physical and mental reprieve as a way to cope with immeasurable stress that has resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, over 82 million people across the country are unable to access a park within 10 minutes from their home, a crucial measure for positive health impacts.¹ The quality and size of local parks also varies across communities. Research shows that parks in primarily non-white communities are half the size of parks in predominantly white communities, and five times more crowded.² ORLP was intended to directly address these social, economic and health inequities.

The Department of the Interior's imprudent decision to unilaterally end the ORLP program directly contradicts the will of Congress and hurts vulnerable communities who most need green spaces. In the final hours of the Trump administration, this secretarial order surreptitiously defies the will of elected officials who have funded this program at increasing amounts each year, and seriously disenfranchises urban communities across the country who were planning to apply for FY2021 ORLP grants.

We respectfully request that Congress permanently authorize the ORLP program to prevent such future regulatory manipulation like this from happening again. We are also urging the Biden

¹ National Recreation and Park Association, "2018 America's Engagement with Parks Report" <https://www.nrpa.org/globalassets/engagement-survey-report-2018.pdf>, 2018.

² The Trust for Public Land, "The Heat is On" <https://www.tpl.org/the-heat-is-on>, 2020.

administration to immediately overturn this decision and restore the ORLP program to its original intent. Our collective goal is that all people have access to green spaces, especially in underinvested communities. Restoring and reinvesting in the ORLP program will allow the federal government to show its commitment to the goal of supporting and achieving equity in the outdoors. We look forward to working with Congress on this important issue.

Sincerely,

National Recreation and Park Association
United States Conference of Mayors
Wilderness Society
REI Co-op
The Trust for Public Land
PeopleForBikes
Hispanic Access Foundation
City Parks Alliance
Children & Nature Network
International Mountain Bicycling
Association
Outdoor Outreach
Missouri Park & Recreation Association
Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society
Latino Outdoors
Youth Outside
Abbate Designs LLC
Maryland Ornithological Society
American Heart Association
KABOOM!
Arizona Heritage Alliance

National League of Cities
Brown Girl Surf
New Mexico Wild
Well Being Trust
American Academy for Park & Recreation
Administration
International Play Equipment
Manufacturers Association
ThinkCreate, LLC
Safe Routes Partnership
American Academy for Park and
Recreation Administrations
New Mexico Asian Family Center
Willamette Partnership
WT Group, LLC Accessibility Practice
Morris Township Parks & Recreation Dept.
Glenview Park District
Greenfields Outdoor Fitness Inc.
Burlington Parks, Recreation and
Waterfront
Texas Recreation and Park Society

Arizona Parks and Recreation Association	Park Pride
Clemson University	Streamlabs
California Park & Recreation Society	Tennessee Recreation & Parks Association
California Outdoor Recreation Partnership	Parks and Recreation Department, City of Albuquerque
BOKS (Build Our Kids' Success)	Prospect Recreation & Park District
Brio2 Solutions	Friends for Youth
Bernalillo County Community Health Council	American Planning Association
SM Watts Consulting, LLC	City of Greeley Culture, Parks and Recreation
Environmental People of Color	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Outdoor Asian	Atlanta Downtown Improvement District
Genesis Health Clubs	Willamalane Park and Recreation District
Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota	City of Lakewood, Colorado
J Kardys Strategies, LLC	U.S. Green Building Council
American Hiking Society	Friends of Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks
National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials	Young Women Empowered
Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)	Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District
Derby Recreation Commission	American Council on Exercise
Urban Libraries Council	City of Pittsburg, KS department of Parks and Recreation
McHenry County Conservation District	Atlanta BeltLine Partnership
Merriam Parks and Recreation	SHAPE America - Society of Health and Physical Educators
Sierra Club	Wilmington Youth Rowing Association
The Venture Out Project	Oak Grove Youth Football
National Afterschool Association	Sustainable SITES Initiative
American Society of Landscape Architects	

United States Center for Coaching
Excellence
The Corps Network
Elite Soccer
Fight For Children
Hyland Hills Park and Recreation District
Baldwin City Recreation Commission
The Bikery
City of Wichita Park and Recreation
Department
Alliance for a Healthier Generation
Oregon Box Lacrosse
Continental Divide Trail Coalition
Gurnee Park District
Maine Recreation and Park Association
NC Recreation & Park Association
Conservation Law Foundation
Seattle Parks Foundation
Lewis Latimer House Museum
Friends of Dallas Parks
Trails and Open Space Coalition
Friends of 4Parks Alliance, Inc
Friends of the East River Esplanade (60th-
120th Streets), Inc.
David Brower Center
San Diego Mountain Biking Association
Big Reuse

Great Rivers Greenway
National Parks Conservation Association
Newtown creek Alliance
Kansas City Parks and Recreation
San Jose Parks Foundation
Portland Parks Conservancy
BBLA, Inc.
American Trails
Outdoor Afro
Green Map System
Hunters Point Parks Conservancy
Friends of Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens
Lily Auchincloss Foundation
Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and
Equity (RISE)
Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association
Youth Transportation Organization (Yoots)
Buffalo Bayou Partnership
South Carolina Recreation and Parks
Association.
TeamSnap, Inc.
Sports & Fitness Industry Association
Great Basin Institute
Washington Wildlife & Recreation
Coalition
Outdoor Industry Association
Musco Sports Lighting, LLC

Washington Association of Land Trusts
City of Las Vegas
Van Cortlandt Park Alliance
E3 Washington
LeagueApps
Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust
National Wildlife Federation
NJ Audubon
Chicago Park District
IslandWood
Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
The Conservation Fund
Louisville Parks Foundation
Gulf Coast Youth Association
Appalachian Mountain Club
New Jersey Conservation Foundation
Conservation Voters of South Carolina
Friends of the Public Garden
Campaign for a Commercial-Free
Childhood
Randall's Island Park Alliance, Inc.
Student Conservation Association
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social
Responsibility
The Mountaineers
Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park

Illinois Association of Park Districts
U.S. Soccer Foundation
The Mountain Pact
Texas Children in Nature
Decatur Park District
Champaign Park District
Little League International
California Mountain Biking Coalition
Indy Parks
Concerned Off-Road Bicyclists Association
Parent-Child Relationship Association Inc.
Prevention Institute
Edgemere Coalition Community Garden
Drew Gardens
Climate for Health, ecoAmerica
American Forests
Watershed Science, LLC
Washington Recreation and Parks
Association
92Blessings
Hoosier Environmental Council
WildCare of Western New York
Merrell
National Association for Olmsted Parks
Akron Parks Collaborative
Environmental Professionals of Color