

January 7, 2020

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, and all Members of the House Committee on Natural Resources:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing millions of individuals and supporters across the country, we express our strong support for H.R. 4512, The Outdoors for All Act. We ask that the House Committee on Natural Resources hold a hearing on this important legislation. Parks and outdoor spaces provide significant health, economic, and community benefits. This legislation would facilitate the creation and improvement of parks and outdoor recreation opportunities without spending taxpayer dollars.

Investments in community parks help grow local economies by creating jobs, increasing property values, and attracting the kinds of businesses, workforces, and private capital that make metropolitan areas economically competitive in today's global economy. In 2015, local parks in the United States generated more than \$154 billion in economic activity and supported 1.1 million jobs.¹ In addition to acting as strong economic drivers, urban parks can function as dual-use spaces for both recreation and green infrastructure stormwater management, harmonizing the natural and built environments and creating resilient communities. More than 80% of Americans live in urban areas, which are engines generating our nation's prosperity, keeping America competitive in the rapidly changing global market, and the most economically sound cities are the ones with ample and healthy parks and open spaces.²

There is a tremendous need for outdoor recreational opportunities in the communities where most Americans live, work, and play. As our cities and urban areas continue to grow, outdoor recreation opportunities have failed to keep up. Currently, one in three Americans does not live within a 10-minute walk of a quality local park. This limits the ability for kids to grow up experiencing the outdoors.³ The Outdoors for All Act would dedicate a portion of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State and Local Assistance Program to the existing Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program, to help the public access or re-connect with the outdoors, particularly in neighborhoods that lack parks and recreational opportunities.

The ORLP program is administered by the National Park Service and funded through the LWCF State and Local Assistance Program. This program awards nationally competitive grants with a state matching requirement that supports urban communities around the country to improve outdoors recreation infrastructure, empower underrepresented communities, revitalize local economies, and enhance the quality of life in urban areas. The ORLP complements the State and Local Assistance Program through a nationally competitive process that focuses on projects in areas with an outdoor recreation deficit and leverages non-taxpayer dollars by awarding matching grants and allows states to put forward projects they believe best fits the outdoor recreation needs of their communities. Additionally, priority is given to

- 1) National Recreation and Park Association, "Economic Impact of Local Parks Report", www.nrpa.org/ParkEconReport, 2018.
- 2) Center for Sustainable Systems, University of Michigan, "U.S. Cities Factsheet", <http://css.umich.edu/factsheets/us-cities-factsheet>, 2018.
- 3) Trust for Public Lands, "Parks on the clock: why we believe in the 10-minute walk", <https://www.tpl.org/blog/why-the-10-minute-walk>, 2016.

shovel-ready projects involving public-private partnerships, underserved communities, and those that provide youth with employment or job training opportunities.

Since its inception in 2014, over \$16 million in ORLP grants have been awarded to over thirty communities in 20 states hoping to improve close-to-home access to the outdoors. Awarded projects have supported a range of activities from improving accessibility of playgrounds to creating canoe and kayaking launches and fishing piers to repurposing vacant industrial land for public uses. These grants have leveraged at least that same amount in private and non-federal public dollars which more than doubled their impact to help urban communities address outdoor recreation deficits by supporting projects in cities and densely populated urbanized areas that create new outdoor recreation spaces, reinvigorate existing parks, build resilient, green infrastructure systems, and help form connections between people and the outdoors.

The Outdoors for All Act would ensure that this competitive grant program continues to identify and highlight new ways of providing opportunities for expanding outdoor recreation in areas with great need, as well as promoting the development of new or enhanced partnerships for outdoor recreation in urban communities across the nation.

We ask you to support H.R. 4512, the Outdoors for All Act, to expand outdoor recreation opportunities and empower underserved communities across the country. We look forward to working with the committee to move this legislation forward. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

America Walks
American Forests
American Hiking Society
American Planning Association
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Landscape Architects
Appalachian Mountain Club
City Parks Alliance
Green Latinos
Hispanic Access Foundation
League of Conservation Voters
Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust
National League of Cities
National Recreation and Park Association
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
Outdoor Afro
Outdoor Industry Association
Outdoors Alliance for Kids
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Sierra Club
The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
The Wilderness Society
U.S. Conference of Mayors
Vet Voice Foundation