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January 27, 2021

President Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express our serious concern involving the \$150 million Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for a new Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) competitive grants program announced on January 19, 2021 by the previous administration. The new program effectively ends the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) grant program by unilaterally diverting critical investments away from local parks. We urge your administration to revise the notice and restore this funding to the existing ORLP grant program to meet Congress' original intent.

In the Fiscal Year 2020 and 2021 budgets, Congress provided a combined \$150 million for local parks through the Land and Water Conservation Fund's competitive ORLP program. The purpose for projects funded by the ORLP program is to expand outdoor recreational opportunities in cities across the country, particularly in underserved areas. The previous Administration's action willfully ignores the intent of Congress by reprioritizing the intended use of the grant funds away from underserved communities who have been hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ORLP program is critical for ensuring parks, open spaces and recreational opportunities are available to the over 80% of Americans living in urban areas. The ORLP helps urban communities to acquire or develop land to create or reinvigorate public parks and other outdoor recreation spaces in ways that will encourage people to connect or re-connect with the outdoors. Priority is given to projects that engage and empower underserved communities, provide opportunities for employment or job training, and involve and expand public-private partnerships.

As cities throughout the country are attracting new residents, investing in new and existing local parks can help further city revitalization and return measurable health, economic, and community benefits. These parks, playgrounds, green spaces, and preserved natural habitats can provide much-needed community spaces for city residents, bringing communities together across different social and economic spectrums. The positive impact these grants would have on cities is enormous.

To advance your expressed commitment to park equity, we respectfully encourage your administration to withdraw without delay the January 19 NOFA by the Trump Administration, and replace it with a grant making process ensuring proper implementation of this critical program to realize its original intent and expand access to local parks.

Sincerely,

Nanette Diaz Barragán

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

/s/ Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

/s/ Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

/s/ Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/ Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/ Bill Foster
Member of Congress

/s/ Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/ Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/ Albio Sires
Member of Congress

/s/ Adam Smith
Member of Congress

/s/ Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

/s/ Jim Himes
Member of Congress

/s/ Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/ Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/ Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

/s/ Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/ Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/ Tony Cárdenas
Member of Congress

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

/s/ Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

/s/ Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress

/s/ Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

/s/ Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

/s/ Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/ Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

/s/ Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

/s/ Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Cc: Secretary of the Interior
Director, National Park Service