

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING H.R. 4984 – D.C. ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL STADIUM CAMPUS REVITALIZATION ACT.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 4984, the D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act.

The Department supports H.R. 4984.

H.R. 4984 would amend the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to direct the Secretary of the Interior to transfer administrative jurisdiction of the entire 174 acres of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus (RFK Campus) to the District of Columbia (District) which is currently under a 50-year lease from the National Park Service (NPS) that is due to expire in 2038. This bill would terminate the existing lease and transfer the administrative jurisdiction of the RFK Campus to the District, subject to the execution of a Declaration of Covenants that would provide certain conditions and restrictions required by the legislation. Those provisions include a restriction on the use of Federal funds for stadium purposes on the RFK Campus, additional permitted uses to include commercial and residential development, protections of the riparian area adjacent to the Anacostia River, the inclusion of 30% of the campus for parks and open space, and improved public access.

The RFK Campus sits on land administered by the NPS as part of Anacostia Park. Originally envisioned by the 1901 McMillan Commission as public gardens and recreation space, Anacostia Park was established in 1918 when Congress directed the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the Anacostia River flats and use the fill to create new parkland. In 1924, Congress established what would eventually become the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) which directed the management of Anacostia Park as part of the park, parkway, and playground system of the Nation's capital. In 1933, Executive Order 6166 transferred NCPC's responsibilities for management of the park, parkway, and playground system, including Anacostia Park, to the NPS.

The District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 previously called for transferring the entire RFK Campus to the District following the repayment of the costs to construct the stadium. However, the RFK Campus remained the property of the Federal government. As amended in 1986, the act directed the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to convey ownership of the stadium building only to the District and establish a 50-year conditional lease for the stadium grounds and surrounding parking. The 1986 amendments required that the property be used for the purposes of recreation facilities, open space, and public outdoor recreation facilities in addition to a

stadium. The lease entered into between the NPS and the District pursuant to the 1986 amendments is the lease that is currently in effect.

The lease area is approximately 142 acres, including the 11 acres occupied by the District-owned stadium structure. Under the current law, if the leased property were no longer used for the purposes allowed by the 1986 law and under the lease, the lands would revert to the Secretary to be administered as part of Anacostia Park and the District would bear the costs of removing structures, or rehabilitating the stadium or land, as the Secretary determines appropriate.

The transfer of administrative jurisdiction as directed in H.R. 4984 would present an opportunity for the District to implement its plan to transform the RFK Campus from acres of asphalt to a vibrant new complex focused on community sports, recreation, park space and cultural amenities that will provide city residents with unprecedented access to parks and recreation space. The transfer would protect NPS interests by improving and protecting existing viewsheds to the monumental core and the Anacostia River for those entering the city and recreating in the area. Redeveloping the RFK Campus would also provide an opportunity to improve the site's environmental conditions and help improve the water quality in the Anacostia River.

Additionally, the bill's requirement for parks and open space would complement NPS park land in the immediate vicinity by requiring that a minimum of approximately 42 acres of the site be used for parks and open space for passive and active outdoor recreation. Of particular note, within the vicinity of the RFK stadium campus there is a 32-acre riparian buffer which contains a portion of the Anacostia River Trail and serves as a critical transition from the 142 acres of leased lands to the Anacostia River. This transition zone protects the river from runoff that would otherwise carry sediments and pollutants into the water. It is critical to ensure that this land is maintained as a riparian buffer. While not currently part of the property leased to the District, this area is included in what would be transferred by this legislation.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.