

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 S. 4259, A BILL TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO ASSESS THE SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING CERTAIN LAND AS THE LAHAINA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 4259, a bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Lahaina National Heritage Area, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 4529 with amendments.

S. 4259 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study, in consultation with appropriate State and local entities, to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating an area in Maui County, Hawai'i as the Lahaina National Heritage Area. The study area would encompass the boundaries of the census-designated place of Lahaina. The study would gather information to help determine whether the area contains an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that represent distinctive aspects of the heritage of the United States; is worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use; and would be best managed through partnerships among public and private entities. The study would include public engagement and be conducted in consultation with the various stakeholders in the area.

The Lahaina census-designated place, located on the northwest coast of Maui, encompasses Lahaina town, Ka'anapali and Kapalua beaches, and the lower slopes of the West Maui mountains. Lahaina has a rich history and was the capital of the Kingdom of Hawai'i from 1820 to 1845. The Lahaina Historic District, which encompasses downtown Lahaina, Front Street, and its vicinity, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962. Tragically, in August 2023, the area was struck by one of the deadliest wildfires in U.S. history. The fire destroyed approximately 80% of Lahaina, and over 100 people lost their lives. Several Department bureaus were part of immediate response efforts, including staff from Haleakalā National Park. The fires directly impacted National Park Service employees, and several have familial and community ties to the Lahaina area. The Department, the National Park Service, and Haleakalā National Park will continue to support the long-term recovery efforts of the Maui community.

We would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on an amendment that would identify a local organization in the legislation that would serve as a national heritage area management entity. Identification of a potential local management entity would indicate on-the-ground support and capacity for engaging in the national heritage area feasibility study process. We also recommend an amendment that would explicitly require consultation with State and

local historic preservation officers, State and local historical societies, State and local tourism offices, and other appropriate organizations and governmental entities, on the appropriate timing for initiating the study so as not to interfere with ongoing recovery efforts.

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