

Thank you Chairwoman Haaland and the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands for holding this hearing on several bills today, including The Outdoors for All Act, which I am proud to sponsor. I also want to thank our lead cosponsor, Representative Mike Turner, for his leadership and support for this bipartisan legislation. Additionally, I would also like to thank Senator Kamala Harris, the lead sponsor of the Senate companion.

The Outdoors for All Act would codify the existing National Park Service's Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program, and create a dedicated source of funding for projects that expand outdoor recreational opportunities in urban and low-income communities.

Parks can be hubs of economic and cultural activity, leveraging private investment to revitalize and reinvigorate urban communities. The Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program has provided 28.2 million dollars in federal funds for over 50 projects, leveraging more than 60 million dollars in funds from local and state governments, non-profits, and private firms.

This bill is personal to me on many levels. As the youngest of 11 kids, in a family that often struggled to make ends-meet, I grew up in the shadow of heavy industrial facilities in the harbor area in South LA.

I can tell you that escaping concrete and asphalt for the green grass of a city park, and little league practice, meant the world to me. It was literally a breath of fresh air.

Today, in that same neighborhood and others like it throughout our country, urban areas, underserved neighborhoods, and communities of color experience disproportionate levels of air and water pollution. They also have even fewer green spaces to enjoy.

A 2017 survey found that in Los Angeles County, 51 percent of residents live more than a half-mile from a park, and the number of ball fields and playgrounds are well under the national average.

This disparity is further exacerbated in communities of color. While the average amount of parkland in the county survey was 3.3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, the city of Compton in my district reported only 0.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. In contrast, the city of Malibu, which has three times the median household income of Compton, has 55.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This is nearly 100 times more parkland.

This vast difference in access to open spaces highlights the importance of dedicated federal parks funding for urban communities. Every kid, no matter where they live and what their income level is, deserves to play on grass and to explore the natural world. Access to the outdoors

can ignite the enthusiasm of young people for their community and their environment.

There is also a direct link to public health. Communities lacking parkland correlate with elevated rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control, creating or improving access to places for physical activity suggests a 25 percent increase in the proportion of the population who are physically active at least three times per week.

We have seen the benefits of green spaces in my district. The Ricardo Lara Linear Park in Lynwood added 12 acres of park space on vacant lots adjacent to the 105 Freeway. The park has a community garden, mile-long walkway, bioswales to filter runoff, and trees to shade and cool the neighborhood, which was really uncomfortable to walk in on hot days. Residents have expressed excitement over the space and have worked on organizing art walks and garden groups at the park.

The wide range of community benefits the Outdoors for All Act can provide is demonstrated by over 65 organizations in support, including but not limited to the Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, the City Parks Alliance, GreenLatinos, Outdoor Afro, Vet Voice Foundation, and the Hispanic Access Foundation.

With this bill, we have a tremendous opportunity. We can partner with local governments to identify and create new green spaces. We can shrink the disparities in public parks access that exist by income level and race. In doing so, we will create new opportunities for economic revitalization, and healthier, more vibrant communities.

I urge the subcommittee to support The Outdoors for All Act. Thank you.