

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing
April 21, 2021
1:00 PM (EST)

Legislative Hearing testimony for “Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site Expansion Act”

Questions from Ranking Member Fulcher for Ms. Leslie Canaan, Senior Field Officer, Preservation Services and Outreach, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Ms. Canaan, I noted that Mr. Clyburn’s Brown v. Board National Historic Site Expansion Act includes a provision authorizing “such sums as may be necessary” for the two new additions to the historic site and the three new affiliated areas. The historic site was originally authorized to receive \$1.25 million for land acquisition and initial development. I am not comfortable with the open-endedness of this authorization. Authorizing committees should not be advancing legislation without spending limits. Do you have an estimate of how much funding will be needed to get these new sites ready for inclusion in the existing national historic site both as full additions and as affiliated areas?

Thank you for your question regarding the required funding needed to prepare the sites located in South Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., and Delaware for inclusion in the National Park System. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has not conducted any formal cost estimates for these locations as part of our efforts to support this initiative. However, during our site visits we noted that all buildings associated with the proposed legislation are in good condition and are not dilapidated. We also learned during our site visits that the sites are interested in financial assistance and grant programs to help them interpret the sites and history of Brown v. Board of Education.

In the early stages of our research for this project, we noted that of the 25 National Park Service (NPS) affiliated areas, the previous Administration’s FY2020 budget justification included amounts for 8 of the 25 affiliated areas ranging from \$33,000 to \$1.58 million. For the NPS affiliated areas proposed in the legislation, the sites would be responsible for maintenance of their properties and therefore would not add to the NPS deferred maintenance backlog.

The National Trust enthusiastically endorses the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site Expansion Act (H.R. 920, S. 270) introduced by Congressman Clyburn and Senator Coons along with a complete list of bipartisan original cosponsors representing the districts and states of the proposed sites. While we defer to the bill sponsors on the legislative language, including necessary appropriations to secure a successful outcome for this effort, we look forward to working with you and the Committee as conversations continue regarding a committee markup for the bill language.