

Opening Statement for Representative Moore
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
Legislative Hearing on H.R. 1548, H.R. 4658, H.R. 6364,
H.R. 6442, H.R. 7496, H.R. 7615, H.R. 7693, and H.R. 7952
June 14, 2022

Thank you, Chairman Neguse and Ranking Member Fulcher, for holding today's hearing. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about the *LODGE Act*, which will improve housing options and affordability in and around our national parks.

The members of this committee are no strangers to the incredible scenic landscapes across our nation. According to estimates, 85% of Americans have visited a national park, and nearly 1 in 3 plan to

visit a national park within the next year. Our national parks are not only beautiful places, but they are also major economic engines.

The management of our lands can send ripple effects through our communities and economies.

When lands are managed well, when agencies have the tools they need, and when communities are involved in the management process, our economies and environment can thrive.

The inverse occurs when any one of these factors is ignored. Over the past few years, visitation rates at National Park Service units have increased

significantly. In the last year alone, 44 units hit record high levels of visitation.

In Utah, rates have gone up nearly 80% since 2011 alone. This has been a tremendous economic boom for many communities—urban and rural alike—in Utah.

However, it has not come without consequences.

While a surge in tourism is beneficial to local economies, it poses major challenges for housing options in national park communities and their neighboring areas.

In recent years, we have seen a shift in the market as more and more property owners choose to engage in short-term rental services rather than leasing properties to the National Park Service and to private sector service employees.

As a result, housing costs in many gateway communities have skyrocketed, displacing the employees who manage these places and keep our parks running.

Employees are moving further and further away from their workplaces, which exacerbates the labor shortages and retention challenges already faced by the National Park Service. And since occupancy

rates are so high, housing cannot be taken out of the inventory for necessary upgrades and improvements, which leads to lower quality housing.

Today, we will have the opportunity to hear from witnesses who will outline some of the dramatic effects these conditions are having.

To turn this situation around, I introduced the *LODGE Act* with my friend Congressman Panetta. This important bill will save taxpayers money while simultaneously improving the quality of our parks.

By cutting red tape and streamlining processes, the *LODGE Act* will allow the National Park Service

to enter into innovative public-private partnerships to meet housing needs in and around our parks.

It is my hope that the new tools this bill provides the National Park Service will allow for the unique needs of each park, its employees, and its visitors to be met and exceeded so that our parks can be properly managed.

Thank you, Chairman Neguse and Ranking Member Fulcher, for this opportunity. It is my hope this bill will receive strong support in this committee, and I yield back.