

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL T. REYNOLDS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR
CONGRESSIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL
RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 4984,
THE D.C. ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL STADIUM CAMPUS
REVITALIZATION ACT**

September 19, 2023

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, 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 the goals of H.R. 4984. Our principal interest is in ensuring that the legislation provides sufficient protection for park and recreational areas within the area that the National Park Service (NPS) has long been responsible for administering, directly or through a lease, in the part of the District of Columbia (District) where the former stadium and adjacent parklands are located. The Department defers to the General Services Administration (GSA) for its views on the aspects of the legislation that pertain to that agency.

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 Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus (Campus) to the Administrator of the GSA. The GSA would assume the NPS's responsibilities under the Federal government's current lease with the District. The legislation would direct the development of a new 99-year lease between the GSA and the District that would permit a number of uses, including a stadium and commercial and residential development, subject to the approval of the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts.

Importantly from our perspective, H.R. 4984 would require that, as a condition of using the Campus for commercial and residential development, the lease would require that the District ensure that the development does not materially degrade or adversely impact any lands under the jurisdiction of the NPS; that 30 percent of the land be designated as parks and open space; and that development provides for public access to the Anacostia River and shall not interrupt the Anacostia River Trail. These requirements would help preserve the Federal government's historic commitment to maintaining significant portions of land in this part of the District as park and recreational space.

The 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 Campus to the District following the repayment of the costs to construct the stadium. However, the 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 in 1968, pursuant to the 1986 amendments, is set to expire in 2038.

The lease area is approximately 142 acres, including the 11 acres that were occupied by the District-owned former stadium structure. Under the current law, if the leased property were no longer used for the purposes allowed by the 1986 amendments 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 District currently manages approximately 851 acres of parkland across the city and the leasing of land as directed in H.R. 4984 would present an opportunity for the District to add to those lands and improve its park system. The bill's additional permitted uses (commercial and residential development) would allow the District to implement its plan to transform the Campus from acres of asphalt to a complex focused on community sports, recreation, park space and cultural amenities. The bill's requirement that 30 percent of the land be designated for parks and open space as a condition for residential and commercial development would guarantee public access to a sizeable amount of park land and outdoor recreation areas.

Additionally, the bill's parks and open space requirements would complement NPS park land in the immediate vicinity. Of particular note, within the vicinity 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 area is maintained as a riparian buffer.

The Department would like to recommend some amendments to the bill as drafted and looks forward to working with Congress. Furthermore, because there are three House committees reviewing this bill and many more steps ahead in the legislative process, we would ask for your support as the bill advances to ensure that it continues to provide for the protection of a sufficient amount of land for open space, park and recreation purposes, consistent with the Federal government's historic commitment to that goal. We look forward to working with you toward that end.

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