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September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

*Via electronic mail*

The Honorable Mr Lawler  
1013 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Lawler,

On behalf of New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, I am writing to express strong support for H.R. 9159, the *Appalachian Trail Centennial Act*, which seeks to enhance the preservation, maintenance, and management of national historic trails and national scenic trails. This legislation will enable better coordination between federal, state and nonprofit entities in the cooperative management of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.), and bolster land protection efforts. Further, the proposed legislation provides for a series of important studies to collect data on visitation and the economic benefits associated with National Trails, supporting the case for these valuable resources to be maintained and conserved into the future.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is one of thirty local Trail Clubs that maintain and protect the Appalachian Trail, overseeing approximately 164 miles of the Trail through the states of New York and New Jersey, respectively. Officially established in 1922, the Trail Conference shares a long and storied history with the Appalachian Trail. The first section of the A.T. was opened in New York between Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks in 1923. Today the Trail Conference is a regional authority on outdoor recreation and trail access in the New York metropolitan area and administers a base of over 2,200 volunteers operating on trails in public parks throughout northern New Jersey and New York states.

Concerning the Appalachian Trail Centennial Act, of particular importance to the Trail Conference is the opportunity to strengthen partnerships to conserve the landscape surrounding the A.T. Pressure from development is a persistent threat and given the scale of the Trail, preserving the wilderness experience intended by its founders is increasingly challenging. Enabling a replicable structure and direction for agencies to coordinate with local organizations in support of conservation opportunities is critical for the long-term protection of the A.T.

Additionally, the Trail Conference appreciates the recognition of the success of the Cooperative Management System pioneered on the Appalachian Trail, and of the local

Trail Clubs, without which managing this 2,190 mile trail would not be possible. This model continues to enable and empower local groups to coordinate improvements to the Trail and react to issues proactively and efficiently, with the necessary oversight by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.

We appreciate the considerable effort you and your staff have undertaken in developing this legislation and reiterate our support for H.R. 9159.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JH" or "Joshua Howard" in a stylized, cursive script.

Joshua Howard  
Executive Director