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Chairman of the Dare County Board of Commissioners
Testimony for H.R. 4931
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Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, good morning. My name is Bob Woodard, and I have the privilege of serving as Chairman of the Dare County Board of Commissioners in North Carolina. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and to provide a local perspective on H.R. 4931, the National Park System Long-Term Lease Investment Act.

First and foremost, I want to express my appreciation for your consideration of this important bill. From the standpoint of a local government leader, I can assure you that this legislation will make a meaningful difference—not only in Dare County, but in communities across the country where public-private partnerships with the National Park Service are vital to local economies and visitor experiences.

Let me share with you an example close to home. In Dare County, we are proud of a model partnership at the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, which is located within the Cape Hatteras National Seashore. A local entrepreneur has stepped forward and made a substantial capital investment in this facility. They have constructed a Fishing Center and carried out significant infrastructure improvements—investments that have improved services for fishermen, visitors, and the local economy alike.

As Chairman of the Dare County Board of Commissioners, I can tell you that my colleagues and I have been very impressed with the results. This partnership has been a resounding success. I've also spoken with the National Park Service superintendent for Cape Hatteras, and he too has praised the quality and impact of this collaboration. It is, in every sense, a win-win for our county, for the National Park Service, and for the millions of visitors who come to the Outer Banks each year. I firmly believe it should serve as a model for the rest of the country.

But here's the problem: The Fishing Center is now five years into a 20-year lease. The operator has expressed a desire to extend the lease so they can protect their investment and continue to build upon their success. Unfortunately, under current law, that simply is not possible. The only option is to open the lease to a new competitive bidding process. That makes no sense for a partner who has already invested millions of dollars into long-term improvements—and it discourages others from pursuing the kind of meaningful investments that the National Park Service needs.

H.R. 4931 provides a straightforward solution. It would give the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Director of the National Park Service, the authority to extend an existing lease if it has been in place at least five years, and if the Director determines that such an extension is in the best interests of the Park Service.

This bill does not require extensions—it simply gives the Park Service the flexibility to make smart, practical decisions when circumstances warrant. In doing so, it would provide the certainty that private partners need in order to invest wisely, while still preserving the authority of the National Park Service to act in the public interest.

In closing, I urge you to support H.R. 4931. In Dare County, we have seen firsthand the tremendous benefits of public-private partnerships when they are given room to succeed. By passing this legislation,

you will empower the National Park Service to nurture those partnerships, encourage responsible investment, and ensure facilities like the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center continue to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to strengthening the National Park System. I would be happy to answer any questions.