



*Office of the Dean
College of Medicine*

April 28, 2014

The Honorable Judy Chu
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Via e-mail SGRec@mail.house.gov

Re: Support Proposed National Recreation Area in the San Gabriel Mountains

Dear Congresswoman Chu:

We support your work to diversify access to and support for the San Gabriel Mountains and Watershed. Your draft legislation that would create a National Recreation Area, designate new Wilderness, and protect rivers as Wild and Scenic is a significant step toward permanently safeguarding this area for current and future generations, and promoting health and environmental justice for all. Your draft legislation provides for a comprehensive management plan, a visitor access plan and study, a public advisory council, and a partnership among federal, state, tribal, and local authorities and the private sector. The public advisory council would include environmental justice representation to help ensure that the management and visitor services plan and access study serves the needs of all people including people of color and low-income people.

The proposed National Recreation Area would serve 17 million people within an hour's drive of the mountains. The San Gabriel Mountains and Watershed provide over 70% of Los Angeles County's open space, and host over 3 million visitors a year. These mountains provide outdoor spaces in the region, which is otherwise one of the most park-poor in the country. Lack of recreational opportunities has severe impacts on urban populations struggling with obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic illness. A National Recreation Area will create opportunities to enjoy outdoor activity that are vital for public health and the well being of people of all ages and walks of life. These mountains include diverse habitats and ecosystems. See <http://chu.house.gov/san-gabriel-national-recreation-area-proposal>. We agree with you: "Lack of recreational opportunities has severe impacts on urban populations struggling with obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic illness. Opportunities to enjoy outdoor activity are vital for public health and the well being of people of all ages and walks of life."

The National Park Service study for the San Gabriels highlights environmental justice and health. Non-Hispanic whites have disproportionately greater access to green space, compared to Latinos and African-Americans. These groups are 12-15 times more likely to have less park acreage per capita compared to non-Hispanic whites. Communities with the least access to green space tend to have higher rates of childhood diseases including obesity and diabetes. NPS recognizes park agencies have an obligation to address these disparities. See <http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/22209>.

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Pioneering in Health and Education

Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science recognizes that wellness and prevention strategies, including access to recreation and healthy green space, are key elements to improve health for all. CDU is a premier mission-driven university dedicated to transforming the lives of underserved communities through health professions education, biomedical research, and compassionate health care. Since incorporating in 1966 out of the ashes of the Watts rebellion, CDU has served South Los Angeles and beyond by working to eliminate health disparities and providing unique, quality education and training opportunities.

We applaud your work with diverse allies to diversify access to and support for a National Recreation Area, new Wilderness, and Wild and Scenic rivers in the San Gabriel Mountains and Watershed.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daphne Calmes, MD". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Daphne Calmes,
Interim Dean