April 25, 2014

The Honorable Judy Chu
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support San Gabriel’s National Recreation Area Legislation

Dear Congresswoman Chu:

The Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC) is excited to support San Gabriel’s National Recreation Area Legislation. LCHC—the only statewide organization with a specific emphasis on Latino health—was founded in 1992 by health care providers, consumers and advocates to impact Latino health by focusing on policy development and community involvement.

The San Gabriel draft legislation to create a National Recreation Area aligns with our mission to address inequities in the environmental conditions that contribute to health disparities among our communities. 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 draft legislation will ensure additional resources, more stakeholder control, and balanced resource management, and promote the diverse values at stake. The public advisory council would include environmental justice representation, however, we believe that the legislation can be strengthened in the following ways:

- Include proposed legislative findings based on the San Gabriel FAQs and the National Park Service study which show how the study area lacks access to close-to-home open space, transportation, and educational opportunities to learn more about recreation facilities and natural resources;
- Include representation for health, civil rights, renters, and urban park interests on the advisory council; and
- Include tribal authorities in the partnership and not only on the advisory committee.

LCHC is a project of the Tides Center, a nonprofit public charity exempt from federal income tax under sections 501(c)(3) and 509(a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code.
The draft legislation as well as work and stewardship programs for at risk youth and Transit to Trails programs that take urban residents to mountain, beach, and river trips are vital in promoting public health and environmental justice in the most park-poor region in the United States. Thank you for your consideration on our comments.

Sincerely,

Xavier Morales, Ph.D.
Executive Director