

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 2, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We are writing to respectfully request that as you formulate your budget request for Fiscal Year 2025, that you increase the budget line for the Accokeek Foundation at Piscataway Park, a National Park along the Potomac River across from George Washington's Mount Vernon. Your agency plays a critical role in how the United States stewards its public lands, increases environmental protections and environmental justice, and honors nation-to-nation relationships with Tribes. The work that Accokeek Foundation does at Piscataway Park embodies and enhances that crucial mission.

The Accokeek Foundation (Foundation) is a non-profit organization that works to preserve and promote the cultural and natural heritage of Piscataway Park and the Piscataway people, who are the original inhabitants of the land that is now Piscataway Park. Through a Cooperative Agreement with the Interior/National Park Service (NPS), the Foundation is a vital partner of the NPS in the management of Piscataway Park. The Foundation provides a variety of services to over 100,000 visitors every year, including organizing educational programming, interpreting the people and the land, restoring and maintaining historic structures and landscapes, protecting the natural environment including the Mount Vernon viewshed, conducting research in consultation with Piscataway tribal leaders, performing public outreach, and much more.

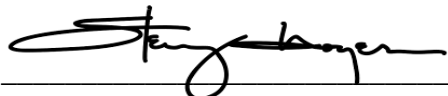
To fulfill these responsibilities, the Foundation receives annual operating funds as a line item in the NPS budget, within the account for Operation of National Park System (ONPS), which supports "the activities, programs, and services that form the day-to-day operations of the National Park System." These funds are essential to the park's everyday operation. The budget request for the Foundation, however, has not increased since 2005. These funds have not been adjusted to keep pace with inflation, and administrative cuts have further reduced the actual amounts received by the Foundation. In Fiscal Year 2023, the federal award was just \$748,000, while the cost of operating and providing services annually has increased to at least \$1.7 million since the last budget increase 18 years ago.

Piscataway Park serves as an important anchor site for the newly established Southern Maryland National Heritage Area administered by the NPS. Consisting of nearly 5,000 acres of public and private land under easements to preserve the historic viewshed from George Washington's Mount Vernon, Piscataway Park is critical in the protection of the ancestral capital of the Piscataway Chiefdom—Moyaon. The capital and its sacred burial ground remain an active ceremonial site for Piscataway people. We are committed to the success of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area and the Accokeek Foundation will play an important role in that success.

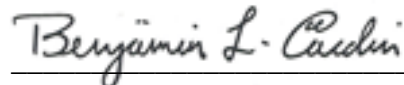
As you formulate your budget request for Fiscal Year 2025, we respectfully request that you increase the budget line to \$1.7 million for the Accokeek Foundation. This funding would support the Foundation's ongoing work to preserve and promote the cultural and natural heritage of Piscataway Park for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,



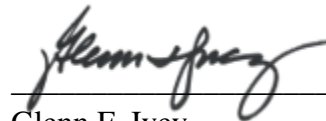
Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Glenn F. Ivey
Member of Congress