

Letter Text:

Dear Chairman Merkley, and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As you prepare the Committees' Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we write to request a \$3 million appropriation in FY 2024 for the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program. Congress authorized this program last year in Sec. 643 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), and the President's FY24 Budget includes \$3 million for the program. The program will be administered by the National Park Service in consultation with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and African American heritage groups.

As you know, too many African American burial grounds from both before and after the Civil War are in a state of disarray or inaccessibility. Beginning with slavery and continuing through the Jim Crow era, African American burial grounds were often confined to remote areas or marginal property, and they frequently were not provided the same sort of state or local support or assistance as predominantly white cemeteries. The African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program will provide grant opportunities and technical assistance to local partners to research, identify, survey, and preserve these important and historic African American burial grounds.

Congressional authorization of the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program was a critical first step toward helping communities preserve these sacred spaces. Fully funding the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Program at \$3 million in FY 2024 will provide grant opportunities and technical assistance to local partners to research, identify, survey, and preserve these important and historic African American burial grounds.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,