

November 3, 2021

Honorable Philip D. Murphy
Office of The Governor
P.O. Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

We respectfully urge you to oppose The Liberty State Park Protection Act (A-2189/S-1449) — a measure that we believe will disempower Jersey City and Hudson County community voices, limit recreational opportunities, and fail to remedy environmental contamination at Liberty State Park.

Since 1977, Jersey City families have waited for the promise of Liberty State Park- the only state park located in a community of color - to become a reality: a clean place for everyone to play safely, appreciate nature, and experience culture. Unfortunately, past promises have not been fulfilled. To this day, the interior of Liberty State Park (over 240 acres and 40% of the Park) remains fenced off, polluted, inaccessible, and unusable despite an (urgent) compelling need for more recreation space in Jersey City. Instead of making the Park an asset for the community, a very small but very vocal number of “preservationists” are fighting to keep the status quo — to maintain the Park in its current untapped and toxic state.

We need your help to stop the Liberty State Park Protection Act. The Act is fatally flawed in a number of key respects:

- The Liberty State Park Protection Act **eliminates the authority of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** to improve and protect Liberty State Park;
- Instead, the Act would privatize oversight of the Park by turning its future over to a select, powerful Advisory Committee that represents the same group of non-diverse special interests who have dominated the planning around the Park for decades;
- The Act **ignores the huge demand from Jersey City residents for recreational activities** and would prohibit large scale active recreation projects like those the community embraced during the recent open forum with the NJDEP;
- The Act would **prohibit any meaningful economic development activities for local residents and small businesses**;
- The Act **doesn't address the environmental remediation and improvements across the entire Park** including the 240 acres of the interior which are still dangerous and polluted;
- The Act **ignores the dire need for transportation and mobility enhancements** in the Park, especially from the most underserved areas in Jersey City;
- The Act **doesn't address the need for more cultural opportunities** at the Park; and
- The Act **includes no public funding** to help make park improvements.

We believe we can protect Liberty State Park from over-development through a community-driven process that would develop a future vision for the Park to also identify community activities, environmental justice initiatives, and a dedicated public funding source to support park improvements in recreation, access, trails and economic opportunities for local residents whose voices have been ignored for generations.

Specifically, we would support legislation that empowers the DEP's widely-praised Liberty State Park Design Task Force — a diverse set of environmental, recreational and local stakeholders. The Committee would

work with the DEP to develop a **new vision for the Park that would address:**

- **Environmental justice and social equity to promote inclusivity and diversity** while resolving public health concerns in the Park;
- **Creation of recreational opportunities for families and kids** in Jersey City need;
- **Economic benefits to provide opportunities for the local business community and residents** with an emphasis on minority business owners;
- **Resiliency from future flooding and sea level rise;**
- **Wildlife management and a habitat restoration plan** to preserve and protect native species and migratory birds;
- **Public arts and cultural affairs** to provide opportunities in the park and for local artists;
- **Transportation and mobility planning to improve access for all community residents** to the park and within the park, and;
- **Planning upgrades to existing park facilities, programs, and amenities.**

The Committee should conduct public outreach and stakeholder meetings across Jersey City to gather input for a revised vision for the Park and should meet on an ongoing basis to coordinate with local stakeholders and provide oversight and input into implementation of such a plan. There also should be funding appropriated to improve recreational opportunities and scenic and wildlife habitat in the Park.

Please help make Liberty State Park “our” Park – the center of activity, culture and opportunity the Jersey City community was promised decades ago — by stopping the The Liberty State Park Protection Act (A-2189/S-1449) and instead supporting a new measure that would promote a safe, clean and accessible park that includes and empowers the Jersey City community. The Jersey City community deserves no less.

Very truly yours,

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Richard Smith, New Jersey NAACP President

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Bob Hurley, Hall of Fame Basketball Coach


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