

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 23, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

We are writing to encourage you to explore options to pursue public-private partnerships to address the housing issues for seasonal National Park Service (NPS) employees at Acadia National Park. Given the unique seasonal housing challenges on Mount Desert Island that not only affect NPS employees but many hospitality and service employees as well, we encourage you to explore the viability of public-private partnerships for park housing to address the growing need for seasonal housing in and around Acadia National Park.

We understand that seasonal housing for NPS employees is a growing concern at number of NPS properties. Acadia, however, faces an exceptional shortage given its geographic constraints. Acadia employs approximately 165 seasonal employees each summer and many are dependent on NPS-provided housing. Short-term, six-month rentals are nearly impossible to find in the summer as the housing market in proximity to Acadia is dominated by second homes and vacation rentals. Further, with the growth of rental sites like Airbnb, many property owners choose to rent their property by the week instead of renting properties for 6- or 12-month terms.

Currently, the NPS has 33 housing units scattered around Acadia National Park in varying conditions. While we both support the Restore Our Parks Act, which would address the National Park maintenance backlog including restoration and repair of NPS housing units, we also support creative administrative solutions to address seasonal housing concerns. In accordance with all applicable laws and regulations, we encourage you to explore all options to address the housing issue on Mount Desert Island in a cost efficient and flexible manner, such as establishing a pilot program to establish a housing public-private partnership.

We believe that allowing Acadia to form public-private partnerships to construct and maintain co-housing opportunities would not only be beneficial to Acadia National Park, but also to local business partners and community members who struggle with housing shortages. Such a partnership could strengthen the relationships between local businesses, the community, NPS, and Acadia National Park. If successful at Acadia, this model could be utilized at other NPS sites with similar seasonal housing concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this unique proposal to a problem that is facing Acadia and many of our national parks.

Sincerely,



Angus S. King, Jr.
UNITED STATES SENATOR



Susan M. Collins
UNITED STATES SENATOR