

Dear Secretary Haaland,

We write to express our strong support for the designation of the Finger Lakes region of New York State as a National Heritage Area. As Members of Congress representing the Finger Lakes region, we welcome this opportunity to recognize our community's many natural, cultural, and historic resources.

Located between the cities of Syracuse, Rochester, Elmira, and Corning, the eleven Finger Lakes consist of Canadice, Canandaigua, Cayuga, Conesus, Hemlock, Honeoye, Keuka, Otisco, Owasco, Seneca and Skaneateles Lakes. Ranging from 40 miles in length and 618 feet in depth, the Finger Lakes are part of a massive and diverse watershed that also includes Lake Ontario. In the 14 counties that constitute the Finger Lakes region, these bodies of water are viewed as a treasured resource and a critical part of our local community.

The Finger Lakes are among the most scenic landscapes and cleanest waters in New York State, serving as an ideal destination for local families and tourists. The lakes themselves provide over 650 miles of shoreline and are the home of more than 128 species of fish. The surrounding region includes a national forest spanning more than 16,000 acres, as well as over 2,000 miles of trail for hiking. Notably, the Finger Lakes region is also the home of 1,063 waterfalls and gorges, including those located at Letchworth State Park, known across the country as the Grand Canyon of the East.

The picturesque and diverse natural resources of the Finger Lakes region serve as a strong cultural and economic foundation for the local community. In addition to the many recreational activities that our lakes, forests, and parks accommodate, the hundreds of local businesses, waterside restaurants, art galleries, and community theaters ensure that the Finger Lakes provide robust opportunities for both residents and visitors. Notably, the Finger Lakes region is also renowned as some of America's finest wine country, acting as the home for award-winning wines from over 100 local wineries, as well as a considerable community of local breweries, cideries, and distilleries.

The Finger Lakes region has also served as the proud site of many critical moments in American history. Of specific importance, the Finger Lakes has an important role in our nation's movement toward equality for all people, acting as the location of the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, as well as the home of renowned abolitionist Harriet Tubman in the later years of her life. Additionally, the region contains more than 100 miles of the historic Erie Canal, over 400 registered historic sites and landmarks, and over 135 museums, including the Seward House Museum and the Corning Museum of Glass.

Designating the Finger Lakes region as a National Heritage Area would be in keeping with the stated goals of the program to recognize cohesive and nationally important landscapes. For this reason, we would like to express our strong support for the favorable consideration of this designation by the National Park Service (NPS). Additionally, we request that NPS consider working closely with existing cultural and

*tourism organizations, as well as local communities from the region, as the designation process moves forward.*

*Thank you for your time and attention to this request. We look forward to your response.*