

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK , ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 4529, TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEMORIAL WITHIN KALAUPAPA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK TO HONOR THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE RELOCATED TO THE KALAUPAPA PENINSULA FROM 1866 TO 1969.

September 28, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 4529, a bill to provide for the establishment of a memorial within Kalaupapa National Historical Park, located on the island of Molokai, in the State of Hawaii, to honor and perpetuate the memory of those individuals who were forcibly relocated to the Kalaupapa Peninsula from 1866 to 1969.

The Department does not object to the concept of establishing a memorial at Kalaupapa National Historical Park as proposed by H.R. 4529. However, because there is no clear consensus among current patients and their family members about the need or desirability of such a memorial, the Department recommends that Congress defer action on this legislation until further consultation with stakeholders has occurred.

H.R. 4529 would direct the Secretary of Interior to authorize Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa, a non-profit organization, to establish a memorial at a suitable location approved by the Secretary of the Interior within the boundaries of Kalaupapa National Historical Park. The memorial would be designed to display the names of the first 5,000 individuals sent to the Kalaupapa Peninsula between 1866 and 1896, and to also display the names of the approximately 3,000 individuals who arrived at Kalaupapa in the second part of its history. Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa consists of patient residents at Kalaupapa National Historical Park, and their family members and friends.

Kalaupapa National Historical Park was established in 1980 to honor and preserve two tragic histories: the removal of indigenous people from the area in 1865 and 1895, and the forced relocation and isolation of Hansen's disease (leprosy) patients to the peninsula from 1866 until 1969. The park contains the physical setting for these stories, including the Hansen's disease settlements of Kalaupapa and Kalawao, and the churches of Siloama and Saint Philomena associated with the work of Father Damien and Mother Marianne Cope. Today the community of Kalaupapa is still home for some Hansen disease patients, whose memories and experiences are cherished values.

The National Park Service works cooperatively with several organizations to manage the site and preserve the stories of residents. One partner, the State of Hawaii, Department of Health, would need to approve the release of any of the names of patients for inclusion in a memorial. The other partners include the Catholic Diocese of Honolulu; The United Church of Christ; State of Hawaii, Department of Land and Natural Resources; and the Department of Transportation. The land owner, State of Hawaii, Department of Hawaiian Homelands, maintains a lease agreement (50 year) with the National Park Service. Each of these groups would need to be consulted. The National Park Service is committed to working with partners, friends' groups and the patients themselves to best honor the stories of those for whom the park was founded.

If the committee acts on H.R. 4529, we would recommend adding a provision specifying that Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa would be solely responsible for paying for the costs associated with the establishment of the memorial and would work with the National Park Service and its partners to design and locate the memorial.

That concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the committee may have.