

**Testimony of the Honorable Bill Pascrell, Jr.**  
**on H.R. 2430, Hinchliffe Stadium Heritage Act**  
**House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation**  
**March 6, 2014**

Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva, I thank you for holding this hearing today on the Hinchliffe Stadium Heritage Act. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this legislation, which is so important to the people of New Jersey. H.R. 2430, the Hinchliffe Stadium Heritage Act of 2013, would adjust the boundaries of the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, in my hometown of Paterson New Jersey, to include historic Hinchliffe Stadium. Hinchliffe overlooks the Great Falls of Paterson - directly adjacent to the current boundaries of the Great Falls National Historical Park. It was built by the people of Paterson as a public works project between 1931 and 1932 and named for Paterson's mayor at the time, John Hinchliffe.

Hinchliffe holds the distinction of being one of the last surviving stadiums in our nation to have hosted Negro League baseball. During the 1930s and 1940s, the New York Black Yankees and the New York Cubans called Hinchliffe home. These games featured future Baseball Hall of Famers such as Paterson's own Larry Doby – the first player break the color barrier in the American League – as well as other greats such as Josh Gibson, Oscar Charleston and Judy Johnson. Hinchliffe also hosted events such as football, boxing and even auto racing throughout its long history. Most recently, Hinchliffe was utilized by the Paterson Public Schools for high school sports.

The Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park Act, which passed the House in 2007 and became law as part of an omnibus public lands bill in 2009, established the Park. As it was originally introduced, this bill included Hinchliffe Stadium within the Park boundaries. This language was replaced during the legislative process with a provision calling for a study of the Stadium's historic significance. The study concluded last year, resulting in a much-deserved National Historic Landmark designation for Hinchliffe Stadium.

I believe that Hinchliffe Stadium's legacy is inextricably intertwined with the mission of the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, which tells the story of Alexander Hamilton's drive to create our nation's first planned industrial city. The modern labor movement began in Paterson's silk mills, when workers fought for "Eight Hours for Work, Eight Hours for Rest, Eight Hours for What We Will!" Hinchliffe tells the story of 'what we will' – the human side of the workers who came to Paterson to work in mills through waves of immigration and the Great Migration. Hinchliffe is the embodiment of Hamilton's vision for an industrial economy powered by free labor and immigration – not slavery.

As I have discussed in my meetings with National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis regarding this legislation, Hinchliffe Stadium and its unique place in history present a sterling opportunity for the Park Service to meet its stated goal of reaching out to urban communities, minorities, and immigrant groups. This legislation would vastly enhance the significance of the Great Falls National Historical Park, and draw in new audiences for our National Parks.

It is true that the Stadium currently sits in a state of disrepair. It has been out of use since 1997, when Paterson Public Schools, the property owner, could no longer keep up with maintenance costs. The stadium has been listed as one of the country's most endangered historic places by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. However, this legislation would not place the burden of restoration or maintenance on the National Park Service, which, as we know, already faces a significant backlog of such work. Instead, this legislation is intended to draw private donations as well as the state and local investments to make the necessary improvements at Hinchliffe. The stewardship of the National Park Service will provide certainty about Hinchliffe's future, facilitating fundraising efforts.

This partnership model has already been proven effective within the current boundaries of the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park. Last fall, I was proud to join in a groundbreaking ceremony on a project to remediate environmental issues and provide landscape improvements for the first parcel of land to be acquired by the park service. This project is being undertaken entirely with state and county funds – not a penny of federal money will be spent. In fact, the City of Paterson has already proven its commitment to Hinchliffe Stadium. Despite the City's dire financial straits, Patersonians overwhelmingly approved a referendum in 2009 allowing Paterson to issue \$15 million in bonds for Hinchliffe Stadium and other projects. To date, the City has bonded over \$2 million, with \$1,250,000 being allocated toward the stabilization and assessment of Hinchliffe Stadium. This project will be kicking off with a presentation from the city's contractor next week.

Furthermore, only two parcels within the Park boundaries are currently scheduled for acquisition by the Park Service, with the rest to be managed in partnership with local property owners and stakeholders. Likewise, Hinchliffe Stadium can remain under the purview of Paterson Public Schools under this legislation.

As the process is already underway to develop a General Management Plan for the Great Falls National Historical Park, it is critical that we move this legislation as quickly as possible to allow Hinchliffe Stadium to be considered during the initial planning process. This will eliminate the time and cost of amending the Park's General Management Plan further down the road to provide for Hinchliffe's inclusion.

For all the reasons I have outlined, I believe that Hinchliffe Stadium is truly a national treasure – more than worthy of inclusion in our National Park System. Let's act now to protect its legacy, which is a vital part of our nation's heritage. Thank you once again for hearing my testimony today.