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Oral Statement of W. Lowell Putnam Regarding H. R. 401

Thank you Chairwoman Haaland and Ranking Member Young,

My name is William Lowell Putnam. It is my pleasure to testify in support of HR 401.

I am the 5th Sole Trustee of the Trust of Percival Lowell, charged with overseeing the continued success of Lowell Observatory, now celebrating its 125th anniversary. Percival Lowell was my great-granduncle and founded the Observatory to both do astronomical research and engage with the general public about the excitement and wonder of understanding the universe and our place in it. I am also a Life Member of The Nature Conservancy and The American Alpine Club and committed to stewardship of our public lands.

The purpose of HR 401 is to allow the Observatory the flexibility it needs to address the changed situation that it faces today compared to 110 years ago when the first Act was passed. All of this is detailed in the written testimony and documents that have been submitted both for this bill and its counterpart in the Senate.

Lowell Observatory and the greater Flagstaff community of Northern Arizona have had a long and mutually respectful relationship over the past 125 years. Flagstaff passed lighting ordinances and dark sky provisions in large measure to support the Observatory and its long record of astronomical discoveries. Flagstaff has the distinction of being designated as the first Dark Sky Community in the world. Similarly, the Observatory has set aside land and rights of way for the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) and many members of our staff over the past century and more have served, and continue to serve, in a number of community positions. Examples include then Director E. C. Slipper who served as mayor of Flagstaff from 1918 to 1920 and our current Director, Dr. Jeffrey Hall, who now serves as Chair of the Northern Arizona Leadership Alliance. We have also brought together a cross section of community members to serve as a committee to participate in our planning for Section 17. As the submitted documents show, there is widespread support for our expansion plans onto the Section and we have received no objections to our proposals.

As a further indication of broad support, I would note that this bill is sponsored by every member of the Arizona delegation with the understandable exception of the Chairman Grijalva, and the corresponding Senate bill (242) is sponsored by both Senators McSally and Sinema.

I have nothing further to add at this point and thank all of you for your time and attention.