

Testimony on HR 2626, the Pullman National Historical Park Act
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
April 21, 2021

Mr. Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, members of the Subcommittee, good morning. My name is Michael Anthony Shymanski. I'm a retired architect and urban planner, a founding member and immediate past president of the Historic Pullman Foundation, and resident of the Pullman Historic District for 54 years. On behalf of the Pullman Community and the thousands of people who have over many years supported Pullman, its preservation, restoration and the establishment of a Pullman National Historic Park, I proudly speak in support of HR2626 the Pullman National Historical Park Act.

During the past 50 years, in various leadership roles I have been directly involved in the efforts to preserve the historically significant Pullman Community. As a graduate student in City and Regional Planning I wrote my first paper on the architectural and urban planning significance of Pullman. Since then my knowledge and understanding of Pullman's greater significance has continued to grow.

Pullman is the place where for over a century, Pullman Companies designed, and workers built the railroad cars that moved America and established an international standard that defined luxury, comfort and service around the world. The Pullman history tells rich layered stories of American opportunity and discrimination, industrial engineering, corporate power and relations with factory workers, new immigrants, formerly enslaved people and their descendants, the beginnings of the civil rights movement, strikes, collective bargaining and the role of government oversight.

The national significance of the Town of Pullman has been well established and recognized by many scholars and authors. In 1971 Interior Secretary Rogers C B Morton designated Pullman a National Historic Landmark. In 2015, by Presidential Executive Order 9233, the Pullman National Monument was established as a unit of the National Park system with direction that the Park Service:

- Preserve the historic resources
- Interpret the industrial history and labor struggles and achievements associated with the Pullman Company, including the rise and role of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
- Interpret the history of urban planning and design of which the planned company town of Pullman is a nationally significant example

The bill before you redesignates the Pullman National Monument as the Pullman National Historical Park. This bill incorporates the provisions of the Executive Order and provides new tools for the National Park Service to work more closely with partner groups within the Pullman neighborhood and the adjacent neighborhoods, to support collaborative programming to interpret history at sites throughout the park's boundary.

This legislation will empower the Park Service to apply its expertise and deep knowledge to amplify local preservation efforts and importantly, to provide expanded support and assistance from the Park Service to help Pullman and the adjacent neighborhoods to draw more visitors and to revitalize this area on Chicago's far south side. While the proposed legislation does not change the boundary of the park, it will give the Park Service the ability to acquire land and historic assets within the boundary – from those who are willing to donate or sell to the park service – ensuring that significant historic structures within the Park boundary will be protected and open to the public for years to come.

Passage of this legislation will reinforce and permanently protect Pullman as a significant cultural resource for our Nation. The Pullman stories overarch America's efforts to understand the economic drivers which led to conflicts between labor, race, capital and government. The powers and authority conferred on the National Park Service by this legislation will expand the ability to tell Pullman's unique and historically significant stories and provide a place where current and future generations can come to learn from the past and inspire ways to meet the unfulfilled promises of America in a just and equitable manner.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important legislation.