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November 28, 2016

Office of the Mayor
c/o The Honorable William A. Bell Sr.
City Hall, Third Floor
710 20th Street N.
Birmingham, AL 35203

Dear Mayor Bell,

I submit this letter on behalf of the members of the African American Mayors Association (AAMA), to avidly voice our support of House Bill H. R. 4817 proposed by Congresswoman Terri A. Sewell, and the other members of the Alabama congressional leaders, for the establishment of the Birmingham Civil Rights National Historical Park in Birmingham, AL as a unit of the National Park System.

With today's pressing issues in America, it is imperative that we recognize and preserve the historical content that is within the Civil Rights District in Birmingham, AL. This district is where great Civil Rights leaders such as Rev. Frederick Shuttlesworth, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and others confronted segregation with the drive to dismantle and eliminate it through nonviolence.

The proposed park is home to the historic A.G. Gaston Motel opened in 1954, the 16th Street Baptist Church, and is the site of the mass protests of the early 1960s that led to the passage of both the Voting Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Act of 1965. These sites have shaped not only Birmingham, but also our country as a whole.

As the National Park Service celebrates its centennial year of service of the currently more than 85,000 properties in the United States, it is essential that the Birmingham National Historical Park granted official status under the National Park System. The proposed Birmingham National Historical Park embodies a rich legacy of America's history, and will serve as a lasting reminder of how far we as African Americans have come, while showing that we still have so much farther to go.

Please share our letter with members of Congress and President Barak Obama as you see fit to ensure that this park receives official recognition and designation expeditiously.

Sincerely,

Sly James, Mayor of Kansas City, Missouri
African American Mayors Association, President