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October 28, 2025

(VIA EMAIL)

The Honorable Dick Durbin
711 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
524 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: NHPA Section 106 Hearing on October 29, 2025

Senators Durbin and Duckworth:

It has come to our attention that the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources will hold a hearing on Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 on October 29. In advance of that hearing, **Landmarks Illinois is reaching out to your offices to express our belief that the Section 106 process is a critical tool for public participation in decisions about the places that embody our shared national story.** We point to recent outcry over the unanticipated demolition of the East Wing of the White House as a timely example of why public process and historic preservation review is valuable to our democracy.

The Section 106 review process is triggered by federal action that has the potential to impact historic properties. It provides an opportunity during the planning process for federal agencies to consider the impact to historic resources and to consult on avoidance, minimization, or mitigation with State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices and other interested parties, called consulting parties. While Section 106 does not require the agency or other parties to avoid impacts to historic resources, the requirement to study and consult frequently leads to better outcomes for these resources. Our organization regularly participates as a consulting party to the Section 106 process for historic places across the state of Illinois. We also provide guidance and support to others less well-versed in this process so that they can have their voices heard regarding the places that are significant to them and to their communities. We have seen many times how Section 106 leads to meaningful dialogue about the future of historic places.

One example of how Section 106 offers important opportunity for public input is the Damen Silos in the McKinley Park neighborhood of Chicago. The Damen Silos were one of the last remaining monuments to Chicago's historic dominance in the national grain industry and a monument to its role in feeding the country. After Section 106 was triggered by the need for a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit, the consultation process brought together the site's private owner with neighborhood advocates, preservation organizations including Landmarks Illinois, the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office, and others. Although most of the site was ultimately demolished, consulting parties secured commitment from the owner that they will preserve or salvage portions of the site, and that they will erect interpretive panels to share the site's history with the public. Without Section 106, advocates would not have had a forum for these conversations, and the entirety of this history would have been lost.

As the Damen Silos example illustrates, Section 106 does not block projects, but rather prompts participants to consider the impacts of those projects before proceeding. Diminishing the Section 106 process would diminish the ability of the public to have a say regarding the historic places that matter to them. **Please communicate to your colleagues on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee the importance of Section 106.**

Sincerely,



Bonnie McDonald
President & CEO