January 24, 2022

Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of our coalition elected officials and organizations, in Illinois and across the United States, we are writing to urge you to use the Antiquities Act to designate a new national monument to commemorate the 1908 Springfield Race Riot.

We strongly believe that this area is worthy of monument status. With less than a quarter of our country’s national parks devoted to recognizing the histories of diverse peoples, movements, and cultures, designating this site will help guarantee that our public lands reflect the diversity of the country. Similar to the Pullman, Stonewall, Hono uliuli, and other recent national monuments, a Springfield Race Riot monument would highlight an often-forgotten event in American history.

The proposed Springfield Race Riot monument would encompass the archeological site near Madison Street and the 10th Street Rail Corridor. After discovering the site and objects such as the foundations of the five houses burned down during the riot, in 2014, the Federal Railroad Administration and the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office determined that the area is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

We also urge you to designate the new Springfield Race Riot National Monument in conjunction with the 113th anniversary of the NAACP’s founding, Black History Month, and the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln. The Springfield Race Riot helped spur the formation of the NAACP, on February 12, so a monument designation and proclamation is
an appropriate way to mark an infamous event in American history and honor the nation’s oldest and largest civil rights organization.

The undersigned officials and coalition of groups strongly urge the Biden Administration to designate a new national monument to commemorate the 1908 Springfield Race Riot and to honor the NAACP. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sierra Club

NAACP Illinois State Conference
NAACP Springfield Chapter
Black Lives Matter SPI
Jewish Federation of Springfield, IL
St. John's Hospital
Faith Coalition for the Common Good
Devine Nine Greek Organizations
Illinois Freemasonry
Flower City Order of the Eastern Star
Equal Justice Initiative
Springfield Dominican Anti-Racism Team
Springfield Call 2 ACTion

Mayor James O. Langfelder
Alderman Shawn Gregory
Alderwoman Erin Conley
Alderwoman Kristen Dicenso
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum
Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum
Dominican Sisters, Springfield, IL
Springfield Illinois Univ. School of Medicine
Memorial Health
Springfield Immigrant Advocacy Network
Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation

CC: Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, CEQ Chair Brenda Mallory