

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

DC PRESERVATION LEAGUE, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE JOHN
F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS, et al.,**

Defendants.

Civil Action No.1:26-cv-00981

**DECLARATION OF SUSAN CAHILL-AYLWARD
IN SUPPORT OF MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

I, Susan Cahill-Aylward, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declare under penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct and based on my personal knowledge:

1. My name is Susan Cahill-Aylward. I am over the age of eighteen and competent to make this declaration. I reside in Reston, Virginia. I am a current member of the American Society of Landscape Architects (“ASLA”).

2. I was a member of ASLA staff for 25 years, from 1996 to 2021. In my last position, I served as the ASLA Director for Information and Professional Practice and was responsible for overseeing the library, archives, IT, and professional practice. In 2009, I was made an honorary ASLA member for achievements of national or international significance or influence.

3. ASLA was founded in 1899 and has its principal office in Washington, D.C.

4. ASLA’s stated mission is empowering its members to design a sustainable and equitable world through landscape architecture. In furtherance of this mission, the ASLA’s core programmatic activities include organizing and presenting professional conferences, educational programs, and publications related to landscape architecture that address issues of national,

regional, and local importance. Through these activities, ASLA advances the professional standards of landscape architecture and promotes public understanding of the discipline's role in environmental stewardship, resilient design, cultural heritage, and the protection of public lands and landscapes.

5. ASLA also advocates for the preservation and responsible management of nationally significant sites and landscapes. As part of this work, ASLA regularly participates in federal, state, and local review processes, including submitting formal comments, providing technical expertise, and engaging in agency consultations regarding projects and policies that may affect historic, cultural, natural, and designed landscapes.

6. Through these ongoing activities, ASLA and its members have a direct and substantial interest in matters affecting landscape architecture, the integrity of nationally significant landscapes, and the regulatory and policy frameworks governing their preservation and management.

7. ASLA has a longstanding and direct institutional connection to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (the "Kennedy Center") in Washington, D.C. ASLA's members include professional landscape architects, designers, and preservationists who use, study, and document the Kennedy Center as a primary example of modern landscape architecture and urban design. ASLA has a particular institutional interest in the Kennedy Center because landscape architects who are members of ASLA were integral to the original design team and have led subsequent renovations and site enhancements. This includes the award-winning REACH expansion, which opened in 2019 and was designed by ASLA member-led firms to integrate the Center's campus with the surrounding Potomac River waterfront. ASLA was a consulting party and is listed as such in the 2015 Memorandum of Agreement for the REACH expansion. Through its professional

publications and educational programs, ASLA has consistently highlighted the Kennedy Center as a nationally significant site that demonstrates the essential role of landscape architecture in creating public spaces of cultural and civic importance. ASLA's members have a direct professional and aesthetic interest in the preservation of the Center's design integrity, as any adverse impacts to its landscape would diminish the professional, educational, and historical value of the site to the landscape architecture community.

8. I have a longstanding personal connection to the Kennedy Center. My family and I have attended events and performances at the Kennedy Center since the official opening in September 1971.

9. My family attended the opening performance on September 8, 1971. My mother was a long-time member of the National Symphony Orchestra ("NSO") Women's Committee from the 1970s through the early 2000s. I volunteered along with her for many years as a docent for the annual NSO Decorators' Show House and the Instrument "Petting Zoo" from 1973 to 2003. I have been a strong and active supporter of the NSO and the Kennedy Center for more than 50 years.

10. I also visit the Kennedy Center's public spaces, including the Grand Foyer, the terrace overlooking the Potomac River, the Hall of States, the Hall of Nations, the rooftop terrace, the REACH Expansion, and the grounds for personal enjoyment and reflection. I view the Kennedy Center not only as a performance venue but as a public landmark that belongs to and serves the people of this region and the nation.

11. The Kennedy Center holds particular personal significance to me because the Kennedy Center represents a timely, engaging, living active memorial dedicated to the performing arts. The Kennedy Center welcomes everyone in the community from public school students at all levels to

passionate, music, theater and opera lovers to new and longstanding National Symphony Orchestra fans.

12. As a former D.C. Public School teacher and administrator, Washington International School teacher, librarian in the Metro D.C. area, and a 25-year staff member with the ASLA, I have had many opportunities to continue to support the activities and events of the Kennedy Center. Throughout my professional career, I was able to share so much of what the Kennedy Center represents to our community, our country and the world as a cultural and architectural icon with special meaning to three generations of my family and to many of my students, colleagues, and friends.

13. As the Kennedy Center is a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, established by Congress, it is the sole national memorial to the late President in the city of Washington. I am aware that the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer determined in 2012 that the Kennedy Center is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The building's historic character, including its original design, materials, and setting within the monumental core, is inseparable from the experience of visiting the site. Alterations that compromise the building's historic integrity would diminish the very qualities that make the Kennedy Center significant to me.

14. I have continued over many years to attend NSO concerts, Washington National Opera as a season ticket holder for several years, also attending special holiday events. I plan to continue to do so in the future.

15. The tribute of naming and creating a living memorial to honor our tragically slain President John F. Kennedy holds a special significance and meaning to millions of Americans. President Kennedy was passionate about supporting our cultural heritage and education. The "renaming" in December 2025 by President Donald Trump and the current Board of Trustees of the Kennedy

Center and installation of new signage changes the impact and significance of what was the original intent of the tribute to President John F. Kennedy. It feels harsh and cruel. I, along with many lifelong supporters, feel betrayed.

16. In or around September 2025, the Kennedy Center's 200 exterior columns were repainted from their original gold color to white. These columns are an original and character-defining feature of the building's Modernist design, integral to the historic character that formed the basis for the D.C. State Historic Preservation Officer's 2012 determination that the Kennedy Center is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This change has diminished my aesthetic enjoyment of the building.

17. On March 16, 2026, the Board of Trustees and its Chair, Donald J. Trump, announced that in less than four months the Kennedy Center will close completely for several years. While closed, the Kennedy Center buildings and grounds will undergo major structural work, up to and including demolition and reconstruction (the "Project"). The Kennedy Center Defendants have stated that "preliminary work has been started" and that "significant construction work" is anticipated to begin after July 7, 2026.

18. These proposed alterations would personally and concretely harm me because the proposed alterations would fundamentally change the historic character of the Kennedy Center in ways that would diminish my aesthetic enjoyment of the site. Specifically, the proposed changes to the building's exterior marble façade, the interior spaces including the Grand Foyer, concert hall, and opera house, the grounds and terraces, and the REACH Expansion, would alter the features that I have described above as central to my personal experience of the Kennedy Center. The Kennedy Center's Modernist design, its materials, its spatial qualities, and its setting along the Potomac are

what make the building meaningful to me, and the proposed Project threatens to destroy or fundamentally alter those qualities.

19. I am further harmed by the Defendants' failure to follow legally required procedures before proceeding with the Project and the already-completed alterations.

20. The failure to initiate and complete Section 106 consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act has deprived me and other members of the public of the opportunity to have our interests considered before irreversible changes are made to this nationally significant historic property. Had Section 106 review been initiated, I would have had the opportunity, either directly or through ASLA, to present my concerns about the impact of the proposed alterations on my concrete interests in the Kennedy Center as described above.

21. The failure to prepare an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement under the National Environmental Policy Act means that the environmental consequences of these alterations, including impacts on the monumental core, the historic parkway, and the Potomac River waterfront, have not been adequately studied or disclosed. I would have reviewed and commented on any such analysis.


22. The failure to submit the Project to the National Capital Planning Commission ("NCPC") for review and approval, and the failure to request advice from the Commission of Fine Arts ("CFA"), has deprived me and other members of the public of the opportunity to participate in the public review processes that Congress established to ensure informed decision-making about development in the national capital. Given the Project's impact on me and my regular use and enjoyment of the Kennedy Center, I would have submitted comments or testimony regarding the proposed Project.

23. To my knowledge, no public comment period or consultation opportunity has been provided in connection with the proposed Project or the already-completed alterations, despite the Kennedy Center's eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. Had such an opportunity been provided, I would have participated and submitted comments describing the concerns set forth in this declaration.

24. The harm I have described is irreparable. Once the historic fabric of the Kennedy Center is altered or destroyed, it cannot be restored to its original condition. The Kennedy Center's architectural and historic character, which forms the basis of its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, would be permanently compromised. The opportunity for meaningful public consultation will be permanently lost if the alterations proceed before the legally required reviews are completed. Monetary damages cannot compensate for the loss of the aesthetic, cultural, and historic qualities I have described. These qualities, once destroyed, cannot be recreated.

25. The proposed alterations are already underway, as the Kennedy Center Defendants have stated that "preliminary work has been started." The 200 exterior columns have already been repainted, new signage has been installed, and the Kennedy Center Defendants have announced that the building will close after July 7, 2026 for multi-year construction.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



Susan Cahill-Aylward

Executed on 03 / 27 / 2026