

## Supporting the Establishment of Gwynns Falls State Park

To whom it may concern:

My name is Dr. Ela Carpenter, and I'm a Baltimore City resident and Friends of Gwynns Falls-Leakin Park member that is in support of City-State Partnership for GwynnsFalls/Leakin Park (GFLP). I believe this partnership would make the park more accesible and welcoming to people, which in turn will help the wildlife that call this park home.

GFLP has been a source of joy and inspiration most of my life. I have fond memories of walking the trails as a little girl with my parents and brother, enjoying the freedom and space of the outdoors, which wasn't available in my neighborhood. I visited Carrie Murray Nature center. As a little girl I knew I wanted a career that would involve wildlife, and GFLP helped nuture that love of nature for many years.

From 2009 to the present I've been a GFLP volunteer and have seen firsthand both the benfits and threats to the park. I see the joy and peace it brings people to walk the labyrinth and watch the magnolia grove bloom – but I've also seen people take advantage of the park's lack of resources to dump, break park and permit rules to host massive gatherings, and engage in illegal activities. I also know many people who like being outdoors but avoid GFLP due to its reputation associates with such activities.

In 2015 I began a PhD program and as part of my dissertation work on bats, I selected several sites in and around GFLP. I was delighted to see how beneficial the park was to this overlooked type of wildlife. At least 6 bat species were documented here, included the tricolored bat, whic may be listed as endangered.

This place has brought me joy as a child, budding biologist, park volunteer, and nature photographer. My career in wildlife biology has taught me that spaces like these can be beneficial to both wildlife and people. To do this we need people to advocate and enjoy the park, and to do that, we need a park that is safe, welcoming, and shows visible signs of care. A city-state partnership, along with the Friends group, would make this possible.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Ela Carpenter