

Good afternoon, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and members of the committee

My name is Gale Fletcher and I am here in support of Bill 1358

Leakin Park is a wonderful asset for West Baltimore, the city of Baltimore, the surrounding counties, and the state of Maryland. I have lived in Hunting Ridge, which borders Leakin Park for the last 32 years. I have cherished the time I have spent in the park, walking, hiking and biking and have shared that love with my children, grandchildren, friends, and family, and even my students when I worked as a Baltimore City teacher.

Most people in the city of Baltimore City do not share my love of the park because it has been underfunded for decades. The absence of rangers and security personnel has created neglect and fear of the park. The absence of organized activities has diminished the number of people even wanting to visit the park. Thank God for the Friends of Gwynns Falls/Leakin for all they have done to preserve this beautiful wilderness. But we need more. We need more investment from Baltimore City and the state of Maryland. We need this city-state partnership.

Leakin Park deserves better. Vote in favor of House Bill 1358. Thank you for allowing me to testify.