

Amanda Cunningham

Re: HB1358, lead sponsor Delegate Malcolm P. Ruff of the Appropriations Committee

March 4, 2024

My name is Amanda Cunningham and I am a Baltimore City resident and a native Baltimorean. I am a certified arborist, a Baltimore Master Gardener, and a board member of the Baltimore City Forest Conservancy District Board. Since 2018, I've served as a volunteer board member with the Friends of Herring Run Parks, in Northeast Baltimore. I am testifying on the need to establish Gwynns Falls State Park, in order bring skill-based natural resource management to Baltimore City.

I am very familiar with the motivations of our westside brethren, the Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park, for seeking a new way to save their urban forest. I too have try to get help with park issues, e.g. haphazard park maintenance and illegal dumping. I and my fellow board members have found the city's response to be a patchwork of ineffective measures. And just when I thought it couldn't get any worse, last spring, a city park maintenance crew cut down mature river birch trees and other native plants at our park's WWI memorial garden. They were told to 'clean it up'. The lack of knowledge on how to care for parks by the very division charged with their care, is astonishing.

When I heard about HB1358, I felt a surge of hope that at least one of our forested city parks will finally be given the attention and skill-based care needed to be a signature outdoor destination park in West Baltimore. I urge our state delegates to move HB1358 forward. It will be a win-win for everyone. And in Baltimore, we need all the wins we can muster.

I say bravo to the bill's sponsors Delegates Ruff, Attar, Addison, Amprey, Boyce, Clippinger, Conaway, Edelson, Embry, R. Lewis, J. Long, Rosenberg, Smith, and Young.

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