



## **Testimony for House Bill 258**

Dear Chairperson Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Delegate Melissa Wells, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee;

As the CEO of Laycon Construction, a real estate development and construction company focused on rebuilding communities throughout Baltimore, and as a proud resident of West Baltimore in District 40, I am writing in full support of the West North Avenue Development Authority (WNADA) and the proposed Maryland House Bill 258.

At Laycon Construction, we specialize in transforming neglected neighborhoods into thriving, livable spaces. Through programs like Vacants to Value, BuyIntoBmore.com, and private acquisitions, we have purchased and redeveloped several vacant properties in West Baltimore, particularly in communities such as Harlem Park, Walbrook, and Panway. Our mission is to rebuild Baltimore, one property at a time, with a focus on creating safe, equitable, and vibrant neighborhoods for residents.

We have also worked within the WNADA target areas and have experienced firsthand the positive impact the Authority has had on fostering a unified vision for West Baltimore's future. Through their initiatives, WNADA has successfully brought together community members, business leaders, and local government to align efforts and resources. Their commitment to ensuring that development is community-driven and inclusive has been inspiring.

The Authority's consistent engagement with residents—through redevelopment plan meetings, sharing visions for the future, and incorporating community input—has been critical in building trust and excitement in neighborhoods that have long felt overlooked. I personally attended a recent redevelopment meeting where the Authority unveiled proposals featuring detailed architectural renderings. These designs, created in collaboration with an architectural firm, vividly reflected months of hard work and meaningful community input. It's efforts like these that give residents hope for a brighter future in West Baltimore.



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Maryland House Bill 258 will build upon WNADA's success by granting it the tools and structure it needs to make an even greater impact. Some of the bill's key provisions, such as the creation of a special fund dedicated to the Authority's initiatives and its exemption from certain state procurement laws, will ensure that WNADA can operate efficiently and respond quickly to the community's needs. The bill's emphasis on making WNADA a permanent organization is especially critical, as it will provide the long-term stability needed to see transformative projects through to completion.

By supporting this legislation, you are not only empowering the Authority but also enabling developers like Laycon Construction to continue investing in neighborhoods that need it most. This bill will strengthen partnerships between the private sector, community organizations, and government agencies, ensuring that redevelopment efforts are strategic, inclusive, and sustainable.

On behalf of my company and as a member of the West Baltimore community, I extend my gratitude for the Authority's hard work and the progress we are already witnessing in the neighborhoods it serves. With the passage of Maryland House Bill 258, I believe that WNADA can lead the way in creating a future for West Baltimore that is equitable, prosperous, and filled with opportunity for all.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the communities of Maryland.

Sincerely,  
Lekan Oketunji  
CEO, Laycon Construction