



828 North Carrollton Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217

Testimony – Bill Hearing – 0258

January 27, 2025

Testimonial Letter to the House Ways and Means Committee,

Chair Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary,

Thank you Chair Atterbeary and the Ways and Means Committee for your support of economic and neighborhood development throughout Maryland. I'm writing to support the House Bill-0258, which supports the continuous support provided by the West North Avenue Development Authority. We are calling on our State to prioritize resources and support for West Baltimore and the efforts of the Upton Community to work in partnership with the West North Avenue Development Authority (WNADA).

My name is Wanda G. Best. I am the Executive Director of the Upton Planning Committee, Inc. (UPC) a community-based, 501 (c)(3) non-profit community development corporation, in zip code 21217 in West Baltimore City, within Census Tract 1403. I have resided 30 years in West Baltimore, where UPC has secured approval of the 2026 Upton Master Plan which is the blueprint for the Upton's development. Our Team has successfully begun the renaissance of the Upton Community by rehabbing Twenty-two (22) row homes for homeownership; developing a building on the Pennsylvania Avenue Main Street corridor into a Welcome Center and Main Street Office; purchasing two commercial properties that will be home to multiple small businesses; welcoming The Afro Charities Headquarters and Justice Thurgood Marshall Amenity Center. We have taken the opportunity of being a neighbor to (WNADA) and leveraged it for our development. I would like to state for the record that the opinions expressed within this letter are my own and are based on my experience in my position and resident.

In my experience, I have witnessed West Baltimore neighborhoods unemployment, lack of retention of businesses and residents and I am pleased that the State of Maryland is taking steps to address the years of economic and neighborhood development abandonment that our community has faced.

I urge the committee to continue to support Economic Development – West North Avenue Development Authority – Alterations. Altering the administration and membership of the West North Avenue Development Authority; specifying the powers and duties of the Authority, subject to certain limitations; exempting the Authority from certain provisions of law; requiring the Authority to take certain actions regarding the finances of the Authority; exempting the Authority from certain taxation or assessments under certain circumstances; establishing the West North Avenue Development Authority Fund as a special, no lapsing fund; and generally relating to the West North Avenue Development Authority. Thank you for the opportunity to share this written testimony and the chance to weigh in on policy and the wellbeing of West Baltimore.

Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated. I would welcome an opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

Wanda G. Best, Executive Director
Upton Planning Committee, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wanda G. Best". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the typed name and title.

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