

January 22, 2025



Testimonial Letter to the State of Maryland Ways & Means Committee
Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chairperson

Thank you Chair Atterberry 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 backs the continuous and enhanced powers provided by the West North Avenue Development Authority to help revitalize West North Avenue, an area long suffering from blight and disinvestment but deserving of equitable development, amenities for residents, and increased public safety.

My name is Graham Coreil-Allen and I am a public artist and placemaker living and working in West Baltimore. I am a member of the Greater Mondawmin community and have spent twelve years in West Baltimore, where I have started and grown my small design-build business and served as a volunteer leader for the New Auchentoroly Terrace Association and the Greater Mondawmin Coordinating Council. I would like to state for the record that the opinions expressed within this letter are my own as a resident and small businessperson.

Building on backgrounds in public art, urban design, ecology, and neighborhood advocacy, my Graham Projects team and I produce participatory projects and in the service of pedestrians and places. My design-build firm collaborates with neighbors to interpret and activate public space through placemaking projects for pedestrian safety and play. Our works include interactive mapping, play-based design events, complete streets traffic calming, art crosswalks, pavement murals, parklets, creative wayfinding, urban design furnishings, and interactive sculptures.

In my experience as a resident and professional urban designer, I have seen West Baltimore neighborhoods both deteriorate or stagnate when it comes to economic development due to lack of resources for the public sphere and private development needed to kickstart a risk-encumbered real estate market. Despite overlooking a 745 acre green space, Druid Hill Park, **my neighborhood of Auchentoroly Terrace is still riddled with over 100 vacant homes and multiple illegal drug operations** that regularly erupt into acts of gun violence harming or killing individuals involved in the drug trade and nearby residents.

The drug corners occupy and terrorize our blocks because the blocks are partially or largely vacant and abandoned. To uproot these dangerous elements and provide safer, more sustainable jobs alternatives for individuals involved in the drug trades, **we need WNADA's expanded investment to renovate and construct safe homes for existing residents and new residents** who would live in our area if it were lacking such housing opportunities.

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. Thus far **WNADA has demonstrated outstanding positive impacts in our community**. The organization has awarded grants to minority developers and small creative companies like mine to help renovate homes, construct new homes, and improve pedestrian safety and public transit access along North Avenue via community-informed tactical urbanism designs and public art strategies. WNADA is helping small businesses like mine grow, create jobs in West Baltimore, and pay local residents prevailing wages to spend in the community.

To further WNADA's ability to invest in West Baltimore, I strongly urge the committee to support House Bill – 0258 and Senate Bill 4.

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.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Coreil-Allen', written in a cursive style.

Graham Coreil-Allen, MFA
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