

Written Testimony in Support of SB0816 & HB1276

The WNADA Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Act

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tracey Malone, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Sandtown Winchester Community Collective in Baltimore City. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of SB0816 and HB1276, the WNADA Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Act, sponsored by [Antonio Hayes](#), [Sarah Wolek](#), [Melissa Wells](#), and [Marlon Amprey](#).

As a lifelong community advocate working in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood, I have witnessed firsthand the power of social connection in stabilizing families, strengthening youth development, and restoring pride in our blocks. The proposed Social Connectivity Initiative under the [West North Avenue Development Authority](#) (WNADA) is not simply about funding events—it is about rebuilding trust, restoring relationships, and investing in the human infrastructure of our communities.

In many of WNADA's 16 neighborhoods, residents are navigating economic hardship, public safety challenges, and generational trauma. Yet what continues to hold us together is connection—neighbors knowing neighbors, youth having safe spaces to gather, elders being included, and families feeling supported. When we intentionally fund block parties, cultural festivals, community clean-ups, and recreational gatherings, we are investing in prevention. We are investing in unity. We are investing in hope.

Green spaces and parks are critical components of this effort. In communities like Sandtown-Winchester, revitalized outdoor spaces provide more than beauty—they provide safety, wellness, and opportunities for positive engagement. Safe, activated spaces discourage crime and encourage community presence. When families feel ownership over their neighborhood spaces, they protect them.

Equally important is communication. Funding for newsletters, community bulletins, and digital platforms ensures that both legacy residents and newcomers remain informed and engaged. Access to information increases participation, strengthens transparency, and builds collective accountability. In communities where trust has historically been fractured, consistent communication is transformative.

This Act also recognizes a vital truth: community work cannot rely solely on unpaid volunteers. Providing stipends for organizers and operational support for community-based organizations ensures consistency and sustainability. It allows youth leaders and neighborhood residents to be compensated for their time and talents while delivering year-round programming that families can depend on.

At the Sandtown Winchester Community Collective, we have seen how modest investments in social connectivity create measurable impact in other neighborhoods—stronger attendance at meetings, safer community events, youth engagement in leadership roles, and increased

collaboration among stakeholders. SB0816 and HB1276 will allow that impact to scale across all WNADA neighborhoods.

Social connectivity is public safety. Social connectivity is economic development. Social connectivity is community healing.

I urge this Committee to vote favorably on SB0816 and HB1276 and support the continued rebuilding of West North Avenue neighborhoods through intentional investment in relationships, resources, and resilience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracey Malone

Executive Director

Sandtown Winchester Community Collective

Baltimore, Maryland