

## **HB959 Written Testimony**

To the House Environment & Transportation Committee,

My name is Jill Jonnes and I am a longtime resident of Baltimore City (Keswick Neighborhood) and board member of the Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park. I am writing to urge you to pass this State Park bill – HB959 -- AND provide the tiny sum requested to fund a Master Plan in the coming year. Project Open Space has well over \$100 million in its coffers. We are asking for a minuscule bit of that big sum to advance the establishment of this state park.

As members of this Environment Committee, you well know the economic importance of parks in cities. When well-run and well-funded, parks are drivers of prosperity. In the past ten years, both Lake Roland Park and Cylburn Arboretum – now properly funded and with much larger dedicated staffs -- have become magnets for people and activities. They are half the size of Gwynns Falls and do not house as many attractions. But we all honestly know that many people are fearful of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park because of an old reputation. Unfortunately, that will not change until people see dedicated staff in a well-funded park.

You have a chance to do something historic and very good for Baltimore. I urge to support this bill AND the needed funding for 2026-27.

Sincerely, Jill Jonnes