



NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: February 25, 2026

Bill: HB 959 - Natural Resources - Establishment of Gwynns Falls State Park

Position: Support

Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for HB 959 – Natural Resources – Establishment of Gwynns Falls State Park. This legislation would designate Gwynns Falls a state park and establish an official partnership between the Department of Natural Resources and Baltimore City to provide accessible outdoor nature-based recreation and learning opportunities.

The National Aquarium connects people with nature to inspire compassion and care for our ocean planet. We help Baltimore City residents discover urban biodiversity through community science, a collaborative process that engages the public in scientific investigation, through the annual City Nature Challenge and other programming. In recent years, we have proudly partnered with the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition, the Carrie Murray Nature Center, and others to organize Leakin Park Bioblitz events, which have resulted in hundreds of research-grade observations of Maryland’s plant and animal species. We have also hosted trail hikes, contributed to restoration work in the park, and participated in Baltimore’s Urban Bird Treaty program activities.

Gwynns Falls Leakin Park consists of more than one thousand acres and is one of the largest urban wilderness areas in the region. The park is within walking distance of thousands of city residents, and is accessible to the residents of Baltimore, Anne Arundel, and Howard Counties. A new state-city partnership park would serve an area of at least one million people and provide improved access to outdoor recreation, enhance conservation of urban forest, and protect important habitats for many diverse species of Maryland wildlife.

Baltimore City is the only jurisdiction in Maryland that lacks a state park, and along with it, the recreational, educational, economic, and cultural benefits which state parks offer. The creation of Gwynns Falls State Park would increase necessary investment in Baltimore’s greenspaces and would allow Marylanders in the region to forge deeper connections with nature and enjoy the benefits of urban wilderness. **We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 959.**

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