

**Good afternoon, Chairman Korman and Members of the Committee. My name is Gale Fletcher and I am Vice President of the Hunting Ridge Neighborhood Association, one of the communities surrounding Gwynns Falls Leakin Park. I am also among the five community members on the Stateholder's Committee that offered a community vision for a partnership park.**

**The Stakeholder Committee rallied more than 500 community members through focus group meetings and surveys to share their ideas, and hopes for a partnership park.**

**So today, I return to you not just with a request, but with evidence of meaningful community engagement and broad public support. The community has stated loud and clear that they want a park with dedicated staff, well-maintained trails, enhanced amenities, and expanded programming that highlights the distinctive natural, historical, and cultural features of this unique jewel in Baltimore City. And we want this momentum to continue by funding the park's masterplan in FY 2027.**

**With clear priorities and stronger governance, the park can live up to its potential as a safe, healthy space that uplifts, rather than depresses the many working -class neighborhoods that surround it. This is more than a park designation. It is an investment in equity, stewardship, safety, and pride for the residents who live alongside and cherish this remarkable space.**

**We respectfully ask that you vote in favor of House Bill 959 with funding for the park masterplan starting FY 2027.**

