

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 816

West North Avenue Development Authority – Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Program – Establishment (WNADA Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Act)

TO: Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Elev8 Baltimore, Inc.

POSITION: Favorable

DATE: March 3, 2026

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Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

Elev8 Baltimore respectfully submits this testimony in strong support of SB 816, the WNADA Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Act.

Elev8 Baltimore is a Baltimore-based nonprofit partnering with schools, families, and communities to ensure every student is prepared for high school, college, career, and life. As an ENOUGH community quarterback and community school implementation lead partner, we see daily that social connection is foundational to youth success, neighborhood stability, and public safety.

Our work is rooted in a simple truth: when families are meaningfully connected—to one another, to schools, and to trusted community partners—young people thrive and communities grow stronger. Through extended learning, family engagement, mentoring, and case management, we build relationship-based systems that foster trust, resilience, and opportunity.

From our experience in West Baltimore (and across the state), strong social connectivity produces measurable benefits aligned with the goals of SB 816:

- **Stronger protective factors for youth:** Consistent, caring relationships with adults and peers reduce isolation, increase engagement, and build resilience.
- **More effective access to resources:** Connected residents share information and access services earlier, preventing crises before they escalate.
- **Deeper school-family-community partnerships:** Engaged and connected parents are more likely to participate in school life and advocate for children's success.
- **Improved community safety:** Events and shared gathering spaces build trust, strengthen collective responsibility, and support violence prevention efforts.

The West North Avenue Corridor is a critical focus for neighborhood stabilization and economic revitalization. By investing in social cohesion, SB 816 strengthens the impact of broader place-based development efforts. The bill's evaluation and replication components also position Maryland to scale successful neighborhood-building strategies statewide.



For communities such as Sandtown, partnering with WNADA would provide dedicated resources to support resident-led planning and implementation, ensuring activities reflect neighborhood priorities.

SB 816 offers a practical, community-centered strategy to strengthen the social fabric that underpins public safety, youth development, and economic opportunity. Elev8 Baltimore respectfully requests a **Favorable** report on SB 816.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Please contact us if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,



Alexandria Warrick Adams
Chief Executive Officer
Elev8 Baltimore, Inc.