



DRUID HEIGHTS
Community Development Corporation

Druid Heights Community Development Corporation

2140 McCulloh Street Baltimore, Maryland 21217

Testimony
Bill Hearing – SB816
Position-Support

March 5, 2026

Honorable Chair and Finance Committee:

I'm writing to support SB816 the WNADA Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Act, sponsored by Senator Antonio Hayes, Delegate Sarah Wolek, Delegate Melissa Wells, and Delegate Marlon Amprey. With this Act, WNADA aims to launch a Social Connectivity initiative funded through grants for existing neighborhood associations and community development corporations. This initiative will bolster social connections and development activities across WNADA's 16 neighborhoods.

My name is JohnDre Jennings, I serve as the Executive Director of Druid Heights Community Development Corporation. I have spent over nine (9) years in West Baltimore, where I work to empower communities of color and increase affordable homeownership. In my experience, I have seen West Baltimore neighborhoods that need an increase of homeownership and revitalized corridors. I am pleased that the State of Maryland is taking steps to address the years of economic and neighborhood development abandonment that our community has faced. This support includes funding support towards neighborhood investment for projects which include Bakers View Homeownership project, restoration of our Maggie Quille Center and green space projects such as our Gold Street project.

Investing in social connectivity will foster relationship-building among neighbors and families through organized events—such as block parties, cultural festivals, and recreational gatherings. Additionally, these investments will enhance green spaces and parks, providing safe outdoor environments for residents.

The social connectivity grants will also support neighborhood newsletters, community bulletins, and digital platforms that help residents access local resources and stay informed about events. This ensures that both legacy residents and newcomers feel connected and informed. Stipends for volunteer organizers and funding for operational staff will help ensure that programming is consistent and not solely reliant on volunteers, allowing neighbors and youth participants to count on year-round activities while receiving compensation for their efforts.

I urge the committee to support WNADA Neighborhood Social Connection and Development Act. Thank you for the opportunity to share this written testimony and the chance to weigh in on policy and the wellbeing of West Baltimore. Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Ms. JohnDre Jennings

JohnDre Jennings, Executive Director