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Health and Government  
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House Chair  
Joint Committee on Cybersecurity,  
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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**Testimony in Support of HB1168: Green Death Care Options Act  
March 5, 2024**

Madam Chair Peña-Melnyk and esteemed members of the Health and Government Operations Committee, it is my pleasure to come before you and offer testimony in favor of **House Bill 1168: Green Death Care Options Act**. This bill adds natural organic reduction (NOR) and alkaline hydrolysis as eco-friendly death care choices for Marylanders.

Last year, I introduced a bill to add NOR as a death care option. The bill passed the house last year with 108 bipartisan votes but was held in the Senate. The legislation this year is different, incorporating edits to address last year's industry objections, and adding alkaline hydrolysis.

NOR gently transforms human remains into soil in 4-6 weeks. The process uses large vessels to hold human remains which are combined with straw, wood chips, and other natural materials. The decomposing process creates heat over 131° F, which kills viruses, bacteria, and pathogens. Even before NOR was first legalized, over 400 customers prepaid a funeral home in Washington State in the hopes it would be allowed eventually. Since then, seven states have now legalized the process: Washington, Colorado, Oregon, Vermont, California, New York, and Nevada.

Alkaline hydrolysis reduces a body within 4-12 hours using 95% hot water and 5% alkaline chemicals, producing ashes. The process employs a stainless-steel vessel with computerized control systems and handling equipment to manage the chemical solution that is heated to 200-300° F. Alkaline hydrolysis is legal in more than 20 states and has been utilized as a death care option in the U.S. for more than two decades.

With significant savings in fossil fuel emissions and land use, NOR and alkaline hydrolysis address the increasing demand for more sustainable alternatives to traditional burial or cremation. As of 2023, 60% of Americans were interested in increasing green funeral options, as reported by the National Funeral Directors Association.

With input from the Board of Morticians & Funeral Directors, the MD State Funeral Directors Association, and the Office of Cemetery Oversight, this bill creates distinct frameworks for state agencies to regulate both procedures, ensuring that each method is used only in suitable circumstances, all remains meet environmental standards, and dispersal locations are limited.

Maryland's funeral industry will have the ability to offer NOR and alkaline hydrolysis only as desired. This legislation simply provides another option for businesses to expand their scope of services (or not) and give people the final word on bodily autonomy. I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 1168**. Thank you.