



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

March 5, 2024

House Bill 1168

Human Remains - Alkaline Hydrolysis and Natural Organic Reduction (Green Death Care Options Act)

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Position: Unfavorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 1168 establishes a regulatory system for reduction operators and reduction facilities; establishes requirements and prohibitions related to the performance of alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction and the disposition of hydrolyzed or soil remains by certain facilities; requires the Director of the State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors to adopt regulations governing the performance of natural organic reduction; prohibits a person from using or disposing of soil remains produced by natural organic reduction in a certain manner, including by using the soil to grow food for consumption by humans or livestock; and generally relating to alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction.

The Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) process reduces the human body to a disposable commodity. The practice of respectfully burying the bodies or the honoring of ashes of the deceased aligns with the virtually universal norm of reverence and care towards the deceased. NOR uses essentially the same process as a home gardening composting system: rotating the remains, maintaining controlled temperatures and adding accelerating chemicals to accelerate the breakdown of the body of the deceased. NOR and other processes, like alkaline hydrolysis, were initially developed for the disposal of livestock, not as a means of human burial. These methods of disposal were used to lessen the possibility of disease being transmitted by the dead carcass and is not necessary for the decomposition of human bodies.

Dispersing the remains in public locations, without an advisory to members of the public, risks people treading over human remains without their knowledge. The "savings" in CO₂ emissions offered in support of the process is easily offset by alternative means of remembrance. A

simple burial or cremation, for instance, maintains the dignity of the deceased while avoiding the potential of the public not being aware of the presence of human remains in public locations.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for an unfavorable report on **HB 1168**.

Thank you for your consideration.