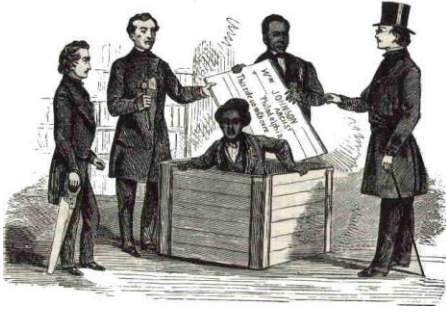


SB 105-Burial Site Letter of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Anthony Cohen

Position: FAV



The Menare Foundation, Inc.
"Preserving the Legacy of the Underground Railroad"

Re: SB 105-Burial Sites of Enslaved Persons - Protection and Access (Emancipation for the Maryland Deceased Enslaved Act)

January 29, 2024

Dear Senator Ellis,

I am writing in support of SB 105 legislation to protect and provide access to the burial sites of enslaved person in Maryland. As the president of the Menare Foundation, Inc.—a nonprofit preserving the legacy of the Underground Railroad—I understand the importance and urgency of this matter. I applaud your proactive legislation to insure the preservation of these vital and irreplaceable cultural resources.

For far too long the final resting places of Africans and their descendants have been overlooked, under-maintained and in many cases are forgotten altogether. Unrelenting forces including development, suburban sprawl, urban renewal and neglect have buried-over, covered-up and obliterated many of these historic resting places and their associated black communities. Those that survive continue to suffer from lack of access and care by descendant communities.

Our facility, The Button Farm Living History Center—located in Germantown Maryland—features an unmarked burial site believed to be the resting place of enslaved people. A dozen or so field stones remain to tell the story, but who is buried there we do not know. As stewards of the land we regularly grant access to the public to engage them in restoration, preservation and education efforts and hope that public engagement will assure the longevity of the site.

The proposed legislation would help to protect these hallowed grounds by promoting preservation, documentation, commemoration and access to descendant communities. As Maryland was the first state in the Union to abolish slavery by popular vote, in 1864, so too let us take the lead in protecting our cultural heritage for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Anthony Cohen
President
The Menare Foundation, Inc.

SB 105 - Signed Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Arthur Ellis

Position: FAV

ARTHUR ELLIS, CPA
Legislative District 28
Charles County



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 301
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3616 • 301-858-3616
800-492-7122 Ext. 3616
Arthur.Ellis@senate.state.md.us

ASSISTANT DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

Senate Chair
Joint Committee on the
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert
Counties' Senate Delegation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

District Office
3261 Old Washington Road
Waldorf, Maryland 20602

January 29, 2024


**Testimony of Senator Arthur Ellis in Support of Senate Bill 105: Burial Sites of Enslaved Persons -
Protection and Access (Emancipation for the Maryland Deceased Enslaved Act)**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldsreicher and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Senate Bill 105 requires an owner of land that encompasses any part of a former plantation to identify and allow visitation to certain burial sites of enslaved persons, under certain circumstances; prohibits the construction of any structure on certain burial sites; establishes the Office of Burial Sites of the Maryland Enslaved; and requires, beginning in fiscal year 2026, the Governor to include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$2,500,000 for the Office.

I urge your favorable report on Senate Bill 105.

Yours in Service,


Arthur Ellis – District 28

SB105 PresMD FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicholas Redding

Position: FAV



PRESERVATION MARYLAND

January 26, 2024

Hon. William C. Smith, Jr.
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: SB105 FAVORABLE

Chairperson Smith,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in **SUPPORT of SB105** – a piece of legislation that will establish a commission to explore, interpret, and commemorate the service of Maryland’s African American Civil War soldiers.

Preservation Maryland is the nonprofit, statewide voice for historic preservation that harnesses the power of historic places by revitalizing and reinvesting in communities, advocating, and building the historic trades workforce for the benefit of all Marylanders. (Learn more at: presmd.org)

The new commission envisioned by this legislation would be empaneled to study African American troops recruited from Maryland and to make specific recommendations regarding potential curriculum, memorials, and opportunities to increase awareness of the nearly 9,000 African American soldiers from Maryland who fought to preserve our nation during the American Civil War. We support this legislation as we believe its passage would bring deserving attention, preservation, and much overdue official recognition to this unique and inspiring aspect of our state’s rich history.

SB105 is an innovative piece of legislation, and we urge a favorable report.

Favorable

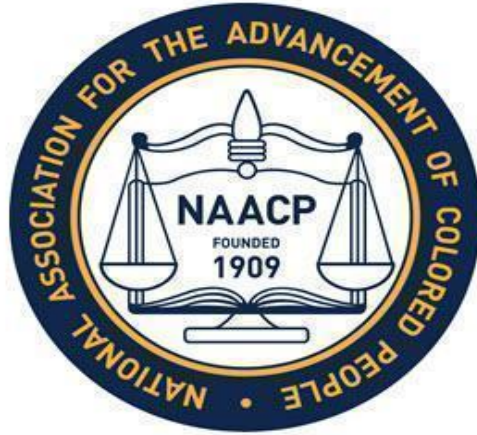
Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Redding, President & CEO

SB105. Favorable vote.pdf

Uploaded by: Ryan Coleman

Position: FAV



Randallstown

P.O. Box 731 Randallstown, MD 21133

Jan 26, 2024
Immediate Release

Contact: Ryan Coleman, President
randallstownnaacp@gmail.com

Randallstown NAACP supports SB 0105-Burial Sites of Enslaved Persons - Protection and Access (Emancipation for the Maryland Deceased Enslaved Act)

It's time for Maryland to ensure our history is perceived and placed in the correct context. We all must do more to break the hold of structural racism.

SB 0105 is a good first step to ensure our history. **The Randallstown NAACP requests a favorable vote on SB 0105.**

Senate Bill 105 Written Testimony By Stephanie Gi

Uploaded by: Stephanie Gilbert

Position: FAV

Testimony Submitted By: Stephanie H. Gilbert

Date of Submission: January 29, 2024

In Re: ***Written Statement for Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 105***

***Burial Sites of Enslaved Persons – Protection and Access 3
(Emancipation for the Maryland Deceased Enslaved Act)***

Bill submitted by: Senator Ellis

Requested: November 1, 2023

Introduced and read first time: January 10, 2024

Background:

Through fourteen years of extensive and collaborative research, which includes the support of the descendants of the enslavers of my ancestors in Maryland, we have identified the site of our family's enslavement, their births, deaths and burials.

While some of our ancestors escaped bondage, and others were sold away, we know that most remained enslaved by these members of Maryland's Founding Families for at least 5 generations of ours, and theirs.

When the man who would later become Maryland's 45th governor, Edwin Warfield, wrote to my 2nd great grandfather Oliver on October 15, 1896, he'd interviewed his family about their history of their enslaved members of Oliver's family, citing the names of Oliver's mother, grandmother and great grandmother, all enslaved on Richland Farm and Walnut Grove Plantations in Clarksville, Howard County, Maryland. (See exhibit A)

As members of the Governor's enslaving family had died on the property of Richland (also known as 'The Quarter Place because the slave quarters were on site) and the Walnut Grove manor home built by Revolutionary War Colonel Gassaway Watkins, the Governor's grandfather, each of them were buried on site, in an honorable family plot at a most prominent peak, visible today from Sheppard Lane.

When first visiting the adjacent plantations in 2010, the Watkins and Warfield plot, full of headstones with names I recognized from my research, was overgrown in a state of neglect. With bare hands, I pulled long grass and weeds from the base of headstones, reinserted a Daughters of the American Revolution flag holder, and said a prayer over the generations of family members whose very lives had been beneficially shaped by the enslavement of mine. I had little other tangible evidence of the history of my family, and no other appropriate memorial to our Maryland lineage and their noteworthy existence there.

Years later, on one of my regular and unceremonious visits, I noted that the above-mentioned family plot had been meticulously manicured, an informative plaque erected above a stone pillar, and a 35 foot tall flagpole established to hold a massive American flag. What a tribute!

I then learned that Boy Scout Troop 007 and Arlington National Cemetery's Society of the Honor Guard had organized an effort entitled 'Gassaway Watkins – Eagle Project', whereby an honor guard ceremony had been planned to follow a lengthy project to restore the grave of Colonel Watkins and his family members. See Exhibit B of my written testimony for the narrative composed by the Society of the Honor Guard, Arlington National Cemetery, inviting the public to honor the memory of Colonel Gassaway Watkins by visiting his grave.

My grandfather Oliver had been enslaved to Gassaway Watkins as his waiter until the age of 8 years old, when Gassaway died. Oliver's mother, Cynthia, has been enslaved to Gassaway as his cook. Cynthia's mother, Rachel, had been placed in charge of Gassaway's 'quarter place' and farm, known as Richland, where Gassaway had lived before building the manor home, Walnut Grove, a few hundred yards away on the same property. Rachel's mother, Celia, and countless other family members also worked the land, managed the home, hired themselves out in positions such as blacksmith and seamstress, and generally kept the affairs of Gassaway's domestic affairs in order such that Gassaway's family could focus on advancing themselves, in business, politics, medicine, and societal interests while income was continuously generated by the free labor force who bore not only their burdens, but also their bloodline.

Our family is struck by this generous commitment to preserve access to the grave of Colonel Watkins such that, according to the Society of the Honor Guard, the 'community can come together to be reunited with those that have served our country'. The letter from Arlington called it 'A perfect demonstration of Americans fulfilling their sacred promise to never ever forget those that have served'. The Watkins family plot is on property owned by private homeowner who is proud to acknowledge that her immigrant family 'wasn't even here' during the American Revolution, yet she yields in remembrance and honor of those who Americans commit as deserving of remembrance.

Yet, just adjacent to this prominent memorial is the well-maintained headquarters to both domestic and agricultural life on Walnut Gove and Richland. Here, oral history tells us that the enslaved people were buried near the slave quarters, which we know were located not far from the rear of the main home.

Richland's immediate past owner, Dan Standish, says he recollects seeing an aerial photo which included the standing slave quarters. The father of Dan's ex-wife, Melanie Dorsey, told Dan and Melanie that the 'slave quarters' still stood when he visited the farm as a boy. Dan Standish also recalls finding what appeared to be broken grave markers near what is now the gardeners' shed behind the home, where the quarters used to stand.

In May of 2023 I was contacted by Beth Burgess, Chief, Howard County Resource Conservation Division seeking confirmation of burials, as she'd been provided a copy of the letter I'd written to Ms. Kim, the new owner of Richland Farm.

Of course, being that the burials were that of enslaved people, I have no confirmation, just as I have no confirmation of their deaths, nor their births, nor their very existence (other than chattel records where they are documented as movable property). Yet, Maryland's General Assembly compensated William W. Watkins (a son of Gassaway) for the loss of his property when in 1867 he laid claim to the loss of 15 'slaves' following the civil war, and Maryland also compensated his brother, John, for the loss of 11 slaves.

It stands to reason that since this relatively wealthy enslaver was burying his own family members in a plot on his property, just yards from his manor home, his enslaved people would not have been transported offsite to be elsewhere buried. As such, we acknowledge the oral history and accept that remains of the enslaved people are, in fact, on site.

For 13 years, from 2010 to 2023, we were afforded access to the property for the purpose of communing with our ancestors and the land on which they lived, died, and were buried. These visits, which took place no more frequently than once or twice per year, were sanctioned by Melanie Dorsey and Dan Standish, the owners. If the owners were not present to welcome us for a more extended stay, the visits lasted no more than 30 minutes and included no more than 2-3 visitors at a time.

Yet, when Ms. Kim purchased the property in 2023, she emphatically ceased the visits, citing that there were plenty of places in the United States where we could connect with the history of slavery in America.

Ms. Kim knowingly and willingly purchased a property which was notably related to the history of slavery. A simple online search of Richland Farm would have yielded dozens of articles and publications about its history, inclusive of the enslaved people and current-day research about the same. Richland Farm also had its own online Wiki page which includes a detailed history of the enslaved people. Yet, Ms. Kim purchased Richland with

the intention of closing the door on this poignant past and asking us to move on without the unparalleled value of access to the physical site of such history, the preserved farm and quarter place.

Conclusion

With legislation in place, such as that proposed by Senate Bill 105, property owners would participate in a satisfying, healing and simple form of reparations: to offer a balm those in descendant communities who choose to honor their ancestors through the ancient and widely accepted ritual of memorial visitation.

We, descendants of Oliver Cromwell Gilbert and his ancestors, all formerly enslaved in Maryland, ask that due consideration be given to stabilizing a fracture in the foundation on which we, Americans, collectively build our future. Allow us, the descendants of the enslaved – all of us, to honor our past with the reverence and dignity that that is afforded our American counterparts. Support our desire to build a sense of pride and purpose in our communities by erecting bridges to a past worthy of tactile and tangible recognition.

Exhibit A



Doc Mar 19, 2023,
9.57.pdf

Exhibit B

Richard Azarro and the Boy Scout Troop 007 which has continued the efforts begun last year to remember Gassaway Watkins, a patriot who served in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. His home was Walnut Grove near Clarksville, Howard County. He is buried there in the family burial grounds. Many patriotic organizations and the community came together last July for a remembrance ceremony. I encourage everyone to join in this event at 11:00 AM on Memorial Day, Monday, May 28.

*James Schaub
President*

*Greetings,
Boy Scout Troop 007 is in the final planning for the flag pole dedication ceremony at the Colonel Gassaway Watkins gravesite, Clarksville, Maryland and invite everyone to attend the ceremony:*

*LOCATION: 5192 Sheppard Lane, Ellicott City, Howard County, Maryland
DATE/TIME: 11:00 AM, May 28, 2018*

*We will start with a procession from Col. Gassaway's house to the family gravesite (150 yards). The flag pole dedication ceremony will be yet another chapter in the inspiring story of patriotism being passed to the next generation. This Eagle Scout initiative is an especially good example of how **a community can come together to be reunited with those that have served our Country in time of war or armed conflict.** The Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier supports this exemplary effort by the Boy Scouts as part of our preparation for the Centennial of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington National Cemetery. This is a story of leadership; of patriotism; and a **perfect demonstration of Americans fulfilling their sacred promise to never ever forget those that have served and sacrificed** so that our freedoms would long endure. By placing the American Flag **(35 ft. flag pole, solar lit) at the gravesite of Col. Gassaway Watkins** (a place of prominence in Howard County), we have the opportunity to remind and inspire all, that we continue to support America, with "our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor". That American Flag will be the "Electric Cord" connecting us to every patriot grave.*

*Looking forward to seeing you there,
Richard A. Azzaro
Society of the Honor Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*

Maryland Catholic Conference_FWA_SB105.pdf

Uploaded by: Jenny Kraska

Position: FWA



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 30, 2024

SB 105

Burial Sites of Enslaved Persons – Protection & Access (Emancipation for the Maryland Deceased Enslaved Act)

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: Favorable With Amendments

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 105 with amendments. The Catholic Conference 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.

Senate Bill 105 seeks to protect and ensure access to the burial sites of enslaved persons. The significance of these burial sites cannot be overstated, as they serve as tangible and poignant reminders of our shared Maryland history, reflecting the struggles, resilience, and contributions of enslaved individuals to the foundation of our State and country.

As we acknowledge the painful legacy of slavery, it is essential that we take proactive measures to preserve and honor the final resting places of those who endured unimaginable hardships. For these reasons the Catholic Church in Maryland has taken significant steps to identifying and preserving the enslaved burial sites that are found on its properties.

While we support the intent of Senate Bill 105 there are some aspects of the bill that are overreaching and broad and we suggest the amendments below to help remedy these issues. We do fully support the formation of the Office of Burial Sites of the Maryland Enslaved that is proposed in this legislation.

In June of 2022 there was a report provided to the chairmen of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and the House Appropriations Committee. The report entitled *Historic African American Cemeteries* was issued by the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture and the Maryland Historical Trust and made several recommendations including several

that deal with the issues raised in SB 105. Here is a link to the report: [2022-Historic-African-American-Cemeteries-JCR-Report_small.pdf \(maryland.gov\)](https://www.maryland.gov/egovernment/AboutMD/Reports/2022-Historic-African-American-Cemeteries-JCR-Report_small.pdf)

The amendments that are proposed below are taken from the recommendations made in the report and accomplish the goals and intent of SB 105 while removing language that is unclear or broad.

AMENDMENT 1

PAGE 2: STRIKE LINES 24-27 AND INSERT: “The Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture, in consultation with the Office of Burial Sites of the Maryland Enslaved shall create and disseminate best practice guidance on how to use archaeological investigations, land survey techniques, and archival research approaches for identifying historic African American burial sites with a special focus on family cemeteries, cemeteries that predate emancipation, and burial grounds of enslaved individuals.”

AMENDMENT 2

PAGE 2-3: STRIKE LINES 32-33 (page 2) and LINES 1-14 (page 3) AND INSERT: “The Maryland Historical Trust and the Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture, in consultation with the Office of Burial Sites of the Maryland Enslaved shall create informational packets for owners of properties that contain cemeteries regarding legal access requirements and make them available for distribution by local governments.”

Access and protection of these burial sites is not only a matter of historical preservation but is vital for educational and commemorative purposes. It fosters a deeper understanding of the struggles faced by enslaved individuals and their descendants and through public awareness and education we can promote a more informed and empathetic citizenry, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility for our state’s complex history.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable with amendments report on Senate Bill 105.