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Budget and Taxation Committee

Public Safety, Transportation,
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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House Health and Government Operations Committee

Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk

Vice Chair Bonnie Cullison

240 Taylor House Office Building

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Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Good afternoon Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 354. SB354 will establish a workgroup to study the creation of the Maryland Inventory of Cemeteries and Burial Sites. Maryland does not currently have a comprehensive inventory of cemeteries. We rely on several state agencies, such as the Office of Cemetery Oversight, the Maryland Historical Trust, and the State Highway Administration to maintain separate databases.

The eventual goal of SB354 is to create a more efficient system, that will make it easier for families, local governments, historians, and others to have access to cemeteries and cemetery records. A comprehensive inventory in a single place will provide consistency and make these records more accessible to all Marylanders who seek them. A unified database will also allow us to better document and preserve cemeteries for generations to come.

This newly established workgroup will be made up of members from across the cemetery industry and will be staffed by the Maryland Historical Trust. Broad, inclusive participation will ensure that we can come to the most efficient and responsible solution to this issue. The workgroup will evaluate current cemetery documentation practices and existing cemetery inventories to determine the best methods for integrating existing information into a state cemetery inventory system. They will also identify and evaluate cemetery inventory systems implemented in other states to determine best practices for and challenges to designing, implementing, and maintaining a cemetery inventory system in Maryland.

Lastly, the workgroup will determine the cost of designing, implementing, and maintaining a state cemetery inventory system and recommend a source of funding beginning in fiscal year 2027.

Thank you for your consideration. I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 354.

Sincerely,

Senator Johnny Ray Salling