

MONTGOMERY PRESERVATION

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Senate Finance Committee Hearing on SB 0233 Jan. 29, 2026 FAVORABLE

I am writing on behalf of Montgomery Preservation, a county-wide nonprofit that has for decades worked with local groups and the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites to advocate for the betterment of cemeteries and needed changes in state law. In 2021-2, I served on the committee charged by House & Senate Joint Chairmen to survey citizens and study historic African American cemeteries in Maryland and recommend strategies to improve their current situations and their futures. This report noted that many properties in every county meet the definitions of Abandoned or Neglected, some because owners are unknown or missing and others that suffer from neglect.

Some good Maryland laws have been enacted since then -- combining forces for a State-wide list and defining the term Abandoned, also creating a fund for the future. The Cemetery Inventory Database workgroup delivered its report to the General Assembly on December 1, 2025; it contains excellent recommendations for implementation. This year we bring other urgent needs to your attention, with suggestions for solving persistent problems.

I am here with fellow advocates to ask your support for proposals that will have a beneficial effect on all Maryland cemeteries. SB 0233 describes what should happen when cemeteries are sold, transferred, or the property turned to another use, all of which happen often. This bill provides a voice to descendants and others who respect those who came before us.

SB 0233 and an accompanying bill address priorities that have long been identified and will help descendants, communities, landowners, and local governments to begin resolving pressing issues. Enacting these bills will begin to tackle long-standing problems that exist in every Maryland county and municipality.

In recent years, we've been pleased to observe increased understanding in the General Assembly about the protection and preservation of our State's noteworthy and precious cemeteries. When supported in committee, most cemetery protection proposals have passed unanimously. We hope you will continue this commitment to help to resolve problems that have been building for years and impact all segments and Maryland populations.

Thank you for your consideration.

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