



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## **Senate Bill 663**

Charles County - Cemeteries - Sediment Control, Stormwater Management, and Forest Conservation

Date: February 24, 2021

To: Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: Oppose

Contact: Erik Fisher, AICP

Maryland Assistant Director

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **OPPOSES** SB 663, which would exempt new or expanding cemeteries in Charles County from rules that protect soil, water, and forests.

### **SB 663 would allow new or expanding cemeteries to ignore environmental laws, putting the environment at risk.**

Like other forms of development, creating and expanding a cemetery can require tree clearing, grading, and paving over fields and forest land. Clearing forest, grading land, and building roads causes significant environmental impacts. These impacts are felt particularly strongly in Charles County, which has lost the third most forest acreage of any Maryland county over the past 15 years.

SB 663 would introduce 'use tests' and 'geography tests' that do not currently exist in state sediment control and forest conservation laws – and that bear no relationship to the impact of the development activity. Public services such as parks, libraries, fire stations and hospitals are all subject to these rules, and successfully comply with them.

### **Environmental laws help prevent erosion, treat runoff, and reduce forest loss during development.**

Grading land exposes and disturbs soil, which is easily lost from a development site and deposited in local waterways. Cutting forest increases nutrient pollution, destroys habitat, and eliminates a critical climate control and clean-air filter. Hardened surfaces and compacted open areas increase the amount and content of stormwater, potentially leading to community flooding and poor water quality.

While Maryland's environmental laws could be strengthened, they stipulate basic protection and mitigation measures needed to protect communities and maintain clean water. The state also relies on these laws to remain in compliance with Clean Water Act permits and fulfill its commitment to mitigate development impacts in the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and WIP.

**CBF urges the Committee's UNFAVORABLE report on SB 663.** For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at [rclark@cbf.org](mailto:rclark@cbf.org) and 443.995.8753.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.