



## ***Funeral Consumers Alliance of Maryland and Environs***

*Protecting a consumer's right to a meaningful, dignified, and affordable funeral.*

**Committee: Senate Finance**

**Testimony on: SB 219 – “Office of Cemetery Oversight – Sunset Extension”**

**Position: Support**

**Hearing Date: January 13, 2022**

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Maryland and Environs strongly supports SB 219 which would continue the Office of Cemetery Oversight (OCO) in accordance with provisions of the Maryland Program Evaluation Act by extending to 2033 the termination provisions relating to statutory and regulatory authority of the Office.

The OCO is the regulatory body that monitors 89 licensed cemeteries in the state as well as around \$90 million total in the perpetual care trust funds and about \$150 million of pre-need funds received from consumers that the licensees maintain. The Office also monitors sellers of burial goods including monuments, as well as crematories that are free standing and where a permit holder or registrant with the Office is the majority owner. Another responsibility of the OCO is investigating and mediating consumer complaints about the businesses it regulates. In summary, the OCO plays an important role in protecting consumers in Maryland from unfair and unscrupulous practices in the operation of cemeteries and provision of related burial goods and services within the state.

The OCO received a very comprehensive program evaluation as part of the sunset process in 2011 and a number of statutory changes subsequently were made by the General Assembly in 2012 to increase the effectiveness of the Office. It is therefore reasonable for the next sunset evaluation to be moved from 2023 to 2033.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on this legislation.

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