

SB 219_MDL_letter of support.pdf

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Position: FAV

Senate Bill 219

Date: January 13, 2022
Committee: Senate Finance Committee
Bill Title: Office of Cemetery Oversight - Sunset Extension
Re: **Letter of Support**

The Office of Cemetery Oversight was established in Title 5 of the Business Regulation Article of the Maryland Annotated Code by the Maryland Legislature in August 1997. It was placed under the regulatory authority of the Department of Labor. The office provides high standards of performance in the death care industry; enhances healthy economic competition; promotes consumer confidence in burial goods, products, and services; and provides structure and oversight to pre-planning arrangements. The Office provides a responsive complaint/resolution process for consumers and operates a fair and effective regulatory enforcement system for cemeteries, monument dealers and sellers of burial goods, and crematories that are subject to its regulatory authority.

The primary objective for the office is to register and monitor Maryland sole proprietorships, individuals, partnerships, corporations, and limited liability companies operating cemeteries, as well as businesses providing burial goods and services to consumers, including monuments and memorials. The Office also regulates and provides registration for crematories under its jurisdiction in the state.

Responsibilities of the Office include the investigation and mediation of consumer complaints involving registrants and permit holders. To protect Maryland citizens from unfair and unscrupulous practices, the office determines and enforces the ethical standards related to the operation of cemeteries and those related to the provision of burial goods and services within the state.

The Office of Cemetery Oversight remains committed to accomplishing its objective of ensuring industry compliance with Maryland law. As well, it is the mission and duty of the Office to protect the citizens of Maryland who are making contractual decisions and financial commitments during a very emotional and painful time.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully requests a favorable report from the Committee on Senate Bill 219.

Andrew Fulginiti, Legislative Director - Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov

FCAME testimony on SB219 - 13Jan2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Brian Ditzler

Position: FAV



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.

Brian Ditzler

bditzler@gmail.com