MARYLAND CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**March 29, 2023**

**House Bill 1060**

**Cremations - Natural Organic Reduction – Regulation**

**Senate Finance Committee**

**Position: Unfavorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers testimony in opposition to HB 1060. We understand the arguments in favor of this bill to legalize the natural organic reduction (NOR) of human remains. However, the NOR process reduces the human body to a disposable commodity. The practice of respectfully burying the bodies or the honoring of ashes of the deceased comports with the virtually universal norm of reverence and care towards the deceased.

NOR uses essentially the same process as a home gardening composting system: rotating the remains, maintain controlled temperatures and adding accelerating chemicals to speed up the breakdown of the body of the deceased. NOR and other processes, like alkaline hydrolysis were initially developed for the disposal of livestock, not as a means of human burial. These methods of disposal were used to lessen the possibility of disease being transmitted by the dead carcass.

Dispersing the remains in public locations, without an advisory to members of the public, risks people treading over human remains without their knowledge. The "savings" in CO2 emissions offered in support of the process is easily offset by alternative means of remembrance. A simple burial or cremation, for instance, maintains the dignity of the deceased while avoiding the potential of the public not being aware of the presence of human remains.

We urge you to consider this legislation in light of the issues we have outlined here, and to give House Bill 1060 an unfavorable report. Thank You.