

**Lily Buekle\_FAV\_HB0869\_03\_28\_23.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lily Buerkle

Position: FAV

## Green Legacy Brands LLC

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**HB 869**

March 28, 2023

The Honorable Melony G. Griffith, Chair  
Senate Finance Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 3 East Wing  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB 869 -Department of the Environment - Study on Deathcare  
and Funeral Practices / FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Griffith:

Please register our unqualified support for HB 869 – Department of the Environment – Study on Deathcare and Funeral Practices.

After working in Maryland for nearly a decade as a licensed mortician and funeral director, I share deep concerns about the environmental consequences – as well as the potential opportunities – associated with prevailing funeral practices. We know that some chemicals used for embalming are toxic and that conventional cremations emit greenhouse gasses. It also is clear that alkaline hydrolysis, natural organic reduction and other emerging funeral practices offer the hope of better environmental results in the future. What our industry does not have is a good roadmap to inform the best route for achieving a positive environmental outcome.

Recently, I co-founded Green Legacy to become Maryland’s first green funeral home devoted exclusively to providing eco-friendly funeral options. Once our facilities are fully-licensed, Green Legacy can offer funeral services that are kinder to the Earth and gentler for families left behind after a loved one dies.

The empirical research promised by HB 869 would offer very useful signposts to help policy-makers, deathcare providers like Green Legacy and, most importantly, Maryland funeral consumers all make better choices.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the committee’s deliberation and we urge your favorable report.

Sincerely,

Lily Buerkle  
Green Legacy, Co-Founder

**HB 869\_mgoldstein\_fav 2023.pdf**

Uploaded by: Mathew Goldstein

Position: FAV



Secular Maryland

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March 29, 2023

**HB 869 - FAV**

Department of the Environment - Study on Deathcare and Funeral Practices

Dear Chair Griffith, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Finance Committee,

According to Business Regulation §5-101(e) cremation is defined as “the process of reducing human remains to bone fragments through intense heat and evaporation, including any mechanical or thermal process.” The phrases “intense heat and evaporation” and “any mechanical” are not well defined and as a result it remains unclear which options other than burial and flame cremation, if any, are allowed for disposing of corpses. Cremation usually occurs within the range of 1400 to 1800 degrees Fahrenheit. Two other reduction methods, resomation and natural organic reduction (a.k.a composting), occur at lower temperatures. The former relies on a chemical process and the latter on a biological process. Both methods should be clearly and explicitly authorized.

Resomation, also known as alkaline hydrolysis, uses a solution of water and potassium hydroxide (caustic potash) instead of high heat flame. The solution is heated to 350 degrees Fahrenheit at a pressure of 10 bar in a steel chamber which dissolves the body. A sterile liquid and bone fragments remain, along with any inorganic materials like tooth fillings and breast implants which could be recycled. The liquid, about 100 gallons total, containing amino acids, peptides, sugars and salts, is treated to lower the PH (by adding acid), and is then disposed (via the sewer system). The process takes no more than 3 hours, breaks down toxic chemicals (including embalming chemicals), kills pathogens, uses a fraction of the energy of traditional cremation, and avoids the emission of mercury vapors.

Natural organic reduction uses no hazardous chemicals. In 2019, Washington became the first state to legalize natural organic reduction as a post-life option. The remains are placed on carbon-rich materials, like sawdust and straw, together with a nitrogen rich material, such as alfalfa, moisture, and circulating air. Bacteria and the enzymes they

release break down the tissue for at least one month (4-7 weeks). Metal fillings, pacemakers, and artificial limbs are removed. A cubic yard of soil plus bones remains (1.5 to 2 cubic yards total). The resulting soil meets safety standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for such contaminants as heavy metals. Commercial processes would likely also process the bones. Composting temperature reach 120-160 degrees Fahrenheit which is sufficient to kill off dangerous pathogens. Someone who dies from a prion or contagious disease would not be a candidate for recomposition.

Traditional cemetery burial is associated with the toxicity of embalming chemicals and consumes wood, metal, and concrete as well as land and water to properly maintain burial grounds. Over 500 pounds of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere by each cremation despite efforts to minimize emissions. Demand for cremation, which tends to be less expensive than burial, now exceeds traditional burial, surpassing 50% in 1996. Yet cremation releases mercury vapors from dental amalgams, dioxins, and particulate matter.

Respectfully,  
Mathew Goldstein  
3838 Early Glow Ln  
Bowie, MD 20716

# **HB869\_IndivisibleHoCoMD\_FAV\_RuthAuerbach.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ruth Auerbach

Position: FAV



**HB869 – Department of the Environment - Study on Deathcare and Funeral Practices**

**Testimony before  
Senate Finance Committee**

**March 29, 2023**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Finance Committee Members,

My name is Ruth Auerbach, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today to **support HB869**, to study the environmental and public health impacts of deathcare and funeral practices in the state. We are grateful for the leadership of Delegate Boyce for sponsoring this legislation.

For many people, making decisions for one's self and one's loved ones about funerals and the deceased body can be extremely stressful and expensive. One difficulty can be aligning one's choices with one's values. The National Funeral Directors Association reports that more than half of Americans are seeking greener funerals. Casket burials and cremation account for 94% of funerals in America, but are the worst choices for the environment. In a typical year, casket burials in the United States use 64,000 tons of steel and 1.6 million tons of concrete, according to the non-profit Green Burial Council. Additionally, each body cremated releases the same amount of greenhouse gas as driving 500 miles. Other end-of-life options, such as human composting, natural burial, and water cremation, are believed to have much less, or even a slightly positive, environmental impact.<sup>1</sup>

When I made these decisions for my loved ones, I helped convince my family to select a pine casket, which is a tradition of my family's religion and which could be better for the environment. However, decades earlier, my now deceased family members decades chose burials in concrete lined cemetery plots which met the legal requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia. For myself, I am considering more environmental options.

This bill directs the Maryland Department of the Environment to conduct a study of the environmental and public health impacts of deathcare and funeral practices. Currently, many of the options that are better for the environment are only legal in certain states. The results of this study would help Maryland legislators decide if there are practices that should be legalized in Maryland that would allow people to make choices for the end-of-life that they prefer and that are better for the environment.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. **We respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.**

Ruth Auerbach, Ph.D.  
Columbia, MD 21046

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Coren, "Comparing green funeral options, from composting to natural burial to water cremation", *The Washington Post*. January 31, 2023.

# **MDE HB0869 Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tyler Abbott

Position: FAV





**The Maryland Department of the Environment  
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

***House Bill 869***

***Department of the Environment - Study on Deathcare and Funeral Practices***

**Position:** Support  
**Committee:** Finance  
**Date:** March 23, 2023  
**From:** Gabrielle Leach

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The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE or the Department) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 869 as amended. House Bill 869 would require MDE, in consultation with the Departments of Health and Labor, to conduct a study of the environmental and public health impacts of various types of deathcare and funeral practices, such as casket burial and cremation, in the State and report the findings to the Governor and General Assembly. Additionally, the bill allows for the Department to consult with subject matter experts, such as trade groups or organizations and academic institutions, to complete the study.

MDE has worked with the House sponsor on the legislation and appreciates the consideration of our amendment to the bill.

For the reasons detailed above, MDE urges a **FAVORABLE** report for House Bill 869.