

Green Legacy Brands LLC

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HB 1060

The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: **HB 1060 – Cremation – Natural Organic Reduction –
Regulation: SUPPORT FWA**

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk:

I am writing to register our enthusiastic support with amendments for **HB 1060, Cremation – Natural Organic Reduction – Regulation**. This legislation would authorize regulations so that Maryland funeral and crematory establishments can begin to offer natural organic reduction (NOR), a process that involves “a controlled conversion of human remains to soil.” A more detailed question-and-answer sheet is attached for your convenience.

As a licensed funeral director who has worked for many years with families in Maryland, the capacity to answer a family’s question with “Yes” is a big part of my passion for serving in this industry. It is my professional badge of honor to “make it happen” for families with a wide range of requests to honor their culture, their religion, and their personal death choices whether that be for: a family who will find some comfort in a special Coptic Christian or Catholic ritual; a daughter who wants my help washing and dressing her mother in a sari; a family who needs to sing *Cuando Allá Se Pase Lista*, eat tamales and drink coffee late into the night at church; or another one engaged by Nigerian Gospel music, dancing in color coordinated outfits at their father’s casket.

These are just some of my real-world examples that prove that our profession needs to provide a diverse community with a variety of choices to make deathcare a healthy experience for the loved ones who survive. But there is one type of family that has been largely left out of available funeral practices today – and that is the “green” family – the family who wants greener funeral options. And there are many of them in the Maryland. Indeed, just several weeks ago, a funeral provider in North Carolina contacted me for help transferring a decedent from Baltimore all the way to his alkaline hydrolysis “water cremation” facility – the closest location where the family could find that green option.

As you know, so many Marylanders revere our natural environment, the beauty of the Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland inspires many of its residents to live a life that is more sustainable. They recycle, compost and garden. They install up solar panels on their house, try their best to reuse grocery bags, donate clothes, and conserve water. They try to buy local produce and meats from our farmers’ markets and spend extra to pay for hybrids or EVs.

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RE: HB 1060 – FWA
March 6, 2023

If given a choice, people in this same community do not want to create avoidable CO2 emissions, take up space in manicured cemetery for an eternity or create the risk of chemical leachate from embalming. If given a choice, many in this State want to return to something that feels more tender, kinder, not only to themselves, but to the environment. They've seen the standard menu – fire cremation or burial – that hasn't changed much since the Civil War and they want something else.

The way we live has changed so much in the past 50 years, but the way we die has not. Maryland can help change that with HB 1060. The bill is not about removing options – it's about adding them. For families who still want conventional death services with fire cremation or embalming and metal caskets and grave liners, those options should always remain. But, according to the National Funeral Directors Association, cremation rates are still growing and expected to reach above 75% by 2040 both nationwide and in Maryland. That means Maryland emissions will continue to grow unless we take action.

After incorporating the amendments being offered by the bill sponsor, HB 1060 will piggy-back on Maryland's existing structure for regulating crematories – enabling both the Maryland Office of Cemetery (OCO) and State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors (State Board) to create new regulations that cover NOR. Then, if the owners so desire, Maryland funeral homes and crematories would be able to add NOR as a new option for the families they serve.

At this point in my career, our team is working to launch Green Legacy, a funeral business that will focus exclusively on offering green deathcare options in the DMV. We plan to offer alkaline hydrolysis “water cremation” and NOR (once it becomes authorized), along with home funerals and services for what I call the “hands-on death families.” Those are the growing number of families who may want to bring their loved ones back home for a vigil, to sit and sing to them, and experience the reality of loss through mindful rituals – these families tend to seek earth-friendly funeral options.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the committee's deliberation. We urge each member of the committee to vote green on HB 1060 – not because it's about any one business; rather, because no Maryland deathcare provider can say “yes” to serving those green families until you do so.

Sincerely,

Lily Buerkle
Green Legacy, Co-Founder

Attachment