

Chairman Brian Feldman
Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD 21401

Honorable Chair and Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

I write as the Secretary of the Lake Evesham Community Association which includes 500 members here in north Baltimore.

I urge a favorable vote for SB893, which would require a 1000-foot setback for new crematorium incinerators from homes, schools, and daycares. This commonsense measure will ensure the availability of cremation services while protecting the health of nearby residents and vulnerable populations.

As you may know, crematoriums are incinerators that lack pollution monitors and emission controls and operate under outdated Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) regulations that were last updated in 1991. Crematoriums frequently incinerate medical devices, implanted in bodies, that contain hazardous chemicals, plastics, metals, pharmaceuticals, and batteries. The existing COMAR rules related to crematoriums do not adequately address the emission burden created by the destruction of these devices during cremation.

As direct cremation is more cost effective than direct burial, Maryland is experiencing an increase in new crematorium incinerator proposals – including in the jurisdictions where there are already clusters (Anne Arundel, Prince George’s, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Frederick).

Our community is concerned that funeral homes are seeking to add these crematoriums to their neighborhood-based funeral homes. This will lead to a large increase in the number of small incinerators located in residential neighborhoods throughout Maryland.

Neighbors throughout North Baltimore’s York Road community are united in our opposition to a proposed new crematorium incinerator at a funeral home in our densely populated and racially diverse neighborhood. Many homes sit within 150 feet of the proposed new pollution source. The blocks directly surrounding the funeral home consist largely of African American residents that have experienced elevated levels of asthma, COPD and other diseases causally related to air pollution. Placing a new crematorium incinerator in this neighborhood would likely have detrimental effects on our neighbors’ health and well-being.

Because current regulations are inadequate, we urge you to support this simple and reasonable fix to protect our neighborhoods and the health of Maryland residents who are already suffering from the existing effects of air pollution.

Sincerely,
Joel Carlin
Lake Evesham Community Association

Cc: Members of the Committee