



Testimony of Karen DeCamp, representing the Board of Directors of
THE YORK ROAD PARTNERSHIP

HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
March 6, 2024

York Road Partnership is membership network of 30+ neighborhoods and affiliates promoting the vitality of Baltimore City's York Road community as a desirable urban environment in which to live, shop, work and worship.

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Honorable Chair and Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I write as the former President and current Secretary of the Board of the York Road Partnership in Baltimore, which is an all-volunteer coalition of 30 neighborhoods, churches, schools, non-profits and institutions.

I urge a favorable vote for HB1374, which would require a 1000 foot setback for new crematorium incinerators from homes, schools, and daycares. This common sense measure will ensure the availability of cremation services while protecting the health of nearby residents and vulnerable populations.

We don't oppose cremation, but we urge the General Assembly to get ahead of the rapid growth of neighborhood-based crematories and make this simple fix to locate these incinerators a reasonable distance from homes and schools.

Crematoriums are incinerators but lack pollution monitors and emission controls and operate under outdated Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) regulations, last updated in 1991. Crematories emit mercury, hydrochloric acid, heavy metals, dioxins, furans and small particulate matter into the air. MDE does not require stack tests or monitor emissions.

Further, because of the increased demand for cremation (it is cheaper than burial, and industry groups estimate cremation now accounts for 60% of death care), we are seeing an increase in new crematorium incinerators proposals – including in the jurisdictions where there are already clusters (Anne Arundel, Prince George's, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Frederick).

Most alarming is that because funeral homes seek to add these crematories at their neighborhood-based funeral homes, we could be looking at a large increase in futures years in these small incinerators located in residential neighborhoods – all over the state.

Here in north Baltimore's York Road community, neighbors are united across a stark racial divide to fight a proposed new crematorium incinerator at a funeral home in a densely packed neighborhood with many homes 150 feet from this proposed new pollution source. The blocks directly around the funeral home, majority Black, already have elevated levels of asthma, COPD and other diseases causally related to air pollution. This is perhaps one of the worst places to place a new crematory incinerator.

Please protect Maryland's neighborhoods with this very reasonable bill.

