



LOYOLA UNIVERSITY MARYLAND

— 1852 —

Center for Community, Service, and Justice

February 25, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee
Room 251
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegate Korman,

The Loyola University Maryland's York Road Initiative, housed within our Center for Community, Service, and Justice, has supported community partners, neighborhood leaders, and local businesses along the York Road commercial corridor in North Baltimore since 2013. I write today to offer our Center's firm favorable support of HB 1374, which offers a balanced solution of allowing crematoriums to operate but at a distance of at least 1,000 feet away from residential properties, daycare centers, schools, and assisted living/nursing facilities.

Our York Road community is a vibrant one, with a diverse coalition of partners working collectively to maintain the health and vitality of the area. The results of these efforts over the past twenty years have been a 39% decrease in vacant homes, two brand new 21st Century Schools, the creation of the York Corridor Business Improvement District Management Authority, and a designation as a Healthy Neighborhood. As we continue our efforts to increase investment in our community and strengthen community health and well-being, we have serious concerns regarding the proposed construction of a human crematory in the 4900 block of York Road.

Our community could suffer with the addition of another point source of air pollution, especially one in close proximity to residential homes, schools, assisted/nursing living and daycare centers. The lack of data on the cumulative health impacts of the crematory, combined with other documented pollution sources, is enough reason to halt this project and those like it. Proceeding without this data would be irresponsible and could contribute to unnecessary adverse health outcomes for the most vulnerable residents—children, the elderly, and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions.

We also view the placement of the proposed crematory, which is set to burn human waste from multiple funeral homes owned by its operator, as an environmental justice issue. Environmental justice is achieved when there is fairness and equity in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. According to the most recent Baltimore Regional Neighborhood Indicator Alliance data, the Greater Govans area is 88% African American with approximately 39% of its children living below the poverty line. Placing a high-volume crematory in a community of color with a vulnerable youth population and without complete data is neither just nor equitable.

Housed within Maryland's only Jesuit Catholic University, our Center is guided by our university's core values that include diversity, justice, and *cura personalis*. We urge this committee to support HB 1374 and prioritize the public's health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. McGinnis', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gia Grier McGinnis, DrPH, MS
Executive Director, Center for Community, Service, and Justice & York Road Initiative