



Councilman Mark Conway
Baltimore City Council *Fourth District*

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TO: Chair Marc Korman; Vice Chair Regina T. Boyce; members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Mark Conway (District 4, Baltimore City Council; Chair, Public Safety and Government Operations Committee)
RE: HB1374 (Environment - Crematory - Setback Requirements and Permits)
POSITION: SUPPORT

Honorable Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the committee,

I am writing today in strong support of HB1374 (Environment - Crematory - Setback Requirements and Permits), which would add a 1000-foot setback for crematories from homes, schools, and daycares. This requirement would safeguard the environment and public health of communities across Maryland, including the ones I am honored to represent in north and northeast Baltimore City.

Crematories emit harmful smoke and pollutants into the air that pose a serious risk to communities¹. These can include PM 2.5 particles, which are so hazardous to human health that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced plans to toughen standards. In contrast, the Maryland Department of the Environment has left regulations on crematories the same since 1991, even as science and our understanding of the impact pollution has on the environment and humans has significantly developed.

Combined with the effects of climate change on temperatures, increased pollution can result in more diagnoses of chronic respiratory diseases. The University of Maryland Medical System describes asthma as “reach[ing] epidemic levels” in Baltimore, with almost half of city schools reporting higher prevalence rates than the national average². 20% of Baltimore’s children (compared to 9% nationally) are estimated to have asthma. The Greater Govans community statistical area in my district was in the second-highest category for youth asthma-related emergency room visits in 2016 (the most recent year for which data is available)³.

With our knowledge and the increased popularity of cremation, now is the time to impose pragmatic limits to ensure funeral homes have the flexibility to cater to this growing market while not imperiling Marylanders. I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Conway, Jr.

¹ Caitlyn Hauke, “The Environmental Impact and Potential Human Health Effects of Cremation”, *Green Burial Council*, https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/environmental_impact_cremation.html

² “Asthma FAQs”, *University of Maryland Medical Center*, <https://www.umms.org/childrens/health-services/pediatric-pulmonology-allergy-sleep/breathmobile/asthma-faqs>

³ Sarah LaFave, “The Unequal Burden of Pediatric Asthma: A Call for an Equity-Driven, Multimodal, Public Health Approach to Asthma in Baltimore”, *Abell Foundation*, [https://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/2020_Abell_pediatric%20asthma_FINAL-web%20\(dr\).pdf](https://abell.org/sites/default/files/files/2020_Abell_pediatric%20asthma_FINAL-web%20(dr).pdf)