

Testimony in Support of SB963 - Abandoned and Neglected Cemeteries Fund - Establishment and Income Tax Checkoff

Presented by Katie Myers, Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates

Chairperson and members of the committee,

I am here today on behalf of the Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates to express our strong support for SB963, which aims to establish the Abandoned and Neglected Cemeteries Fund. This important legislation provides a critical mechanism for the preservation of Maryland's historic cemeteries, including those suffering from significant erosion and neglect.

Hoopers Island is one of the oldest settled areas in America. As someone whose family originally hails from the "Island," I feel personally involved in the efforts to save Anchor Hope Cemetery and Old Hoopers Island Graveyard where I have family buried. I have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of environmental degradation on our historic burial sites. Anchor Hope Cemetery, which has served as a resting place for multiple families, is now at risk of being lost to the Chesapeake Bay due to the erosion of its shoreline. High tides and strong waves have eroded the land that once served as a buffer between the graves and the water, threatening to wash away the very graves of our ancestors into the bay.

The erosion of Anchor Hope Cemetery is not just a local tragedy; it is a statewide issue. This cemetery, which has been named one of the top 10 historic sites in Maryland in danger of disappearing by Preservation Maryland in 2010, represents a significant part of our heritage and culture. Suffering the loss of this cemetery would be a shame for all Marylanders, and we are not alone in facing this threat to our history. Many other cemeteries throughout the state are suffering from similar challenges due to erosion, neglect, and the passage of time.

This bill offers a vital lifeline for preserving these sacred spaces. By establishing a dedicated fund for abandoned and neglected cemeteries, SB963 will ensure that the necessary resources are available to protect and restore cemeteries like Anchor Hope and Old Hoopers Island Graveyard. The ability to contribute through the income tax checkoff also makes it easier for

Maryland residents to support these preservation efforts, ensuring that our historic cemeteries are not forgotten, but rather protected for future generations.

We from the Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates urge the committee to pass SB963 and provide the necessary support to safeguard Maryland's historic cemeteries. These sites are not only pieces of marylanders personal history, but they are an integral part of our state's cultural fabric.

Thank you for your time and consideration. .

Sincerely,

Katie Myers

Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates