

My name is Ari Gutman and I am a member of the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition in Bethesda, Maryland. I want to start by thanking Delegate Simmons for co-sponsoring this bill and, from my understanding, supporting an amendment to the bill which would empower descendant communities.

Communities like ours have had to deal with the issues expressed in this bill and have years of experience working to protect a cemetery that was once abandoned. As a member of BACC, I believe it is necessary for this bill to include such an amendment which would allow descendant communities, in the case of a sale or disposition of an abandoned cemetery, to go to court if they believe the Director of Cemeteries has made an inadequate decision.

Unless this bill includes such an amendment, I cannot support this bill. Thank you again.