



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary**

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**Senate Bill 57 - Funeral Establishments, Crematories, and Reduction Facilities - Disposition of
Unclaimed Remains - Veterans
SUPPORT**

February 3, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Room 241, Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) is committed to leading veterans and their families through life's transitions, making Maryland the best state for the military-connected communities. DVMF fulfills its mission through five core programs: the Service and Benefits Program, which helps veterans access federal, state, and local earned benefits; Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, offering assisted living and skilled nursing care; the Cemetery and Memorial Program, providing dignified resting places and maintaining memorials honoring Maryland's veterans; the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program, fostering connection and awareness; and the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, offering financial assistance to veterans and their families in need. These programs reflect Maryland's commitment to honoring and empowering its military-connected community.

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families supports Senate Bill 57-Funeral Establishments, Crematories, and Reduction Facilities - Disposition of Unclaimed Remains - Veterans.

The Department believes that Senate Bill 57 establishes a better structured and respectful process for the disposition of unclaimed remains of veterans and their eligible dependents. This legislation underscores Maryland's unwavering commitment to ensuring that no veteran is forgotten, even in death.

Far too often, the remains of veterans go unclaimed due to a variety of circumstances, including lack of immediate family, financial hardship, or bureaucratic barriers. Senate Bill 57 directly addresses this issue by ensuring that the cremated, hydrolyzed, or soil remains of veterans who qualify for burial in a state veterans cemetery receive a dignified final resting place. By requiring funeral establishments, crematories, and reduction facilities to notify and transfer unclaimed remains to a veterans service organization or DVMF, this bill strengthens Maryland's dedication to honoring those who served our country.

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Key Benefits to the Military-Connected Community:

1. **Ensuring Dignified Burial for Veterans** – This legislation guarantees that veterans who dedicated their lives to service are provided with a proper burial in a state veterans cemetery, preserving their honor and legacy.
2. **Supporting Military Families** – The bill also acknowledges the sacrifice of military families by including eligible dependents in the process, ensuring they receive the same dignified treatment as their veteran loved ones.
3. **Reducing Bureaucratic Barriers** – By streamlining the process for funeral establishments and crematories to transfer unclaimed remains to DVMF, this bill minimizes delays and ensures timely, respectful handling of veterans' remains.
4. **Strengthening State and Veteran Service Organization (VSO) Partnerships** – This bill enhances collaboration between Maryland's veteran organizations, funeral establishments, and state agencies to ensure no veteran is left behind, reinforcing our collective responsibility to care for those who served.
5. **Demonstrating Maryland's Leadership in Veteran Affairs** – Passage of SB 57 would further establish Maryland as a national leader in supporting and honoring military veterans and their families.

Thank you for your attention to this important proposal and I ask the committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anthony Woods".

Anthony C. Woods
Secretary