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10240 Harvest Fields Drive
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SB 0671 Testimony: FAVORABLE

Sponsor: Senator Washington,

My name is Candy Warden. I am President of the Rosa Bonheur Society, Inc. (RBS), a volunteer, nonprofit group formed in 2007 to protect and preserve the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, a Maryland human and pet cemetery with thousands of burials. The people with loved ones resting at our cemetery span across all the counties of Maryland.

A Comprehensive Study

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive study to be conducted on the environmental and public health impacts of deathcare and funeral practices. To reach a more thorough understanding of the issues relevant aspects, variables, and perspectives the data must be consolidated to identify and analyze potential hazards. The study would investigate existing data on an extensive level, which would minimize the risk of overlooking crucial information.

There are Many Questions

How can Maryland respond effectively to emergencies, such as, pandemics and other disasters when deaths are occurring at a greatly increased rate?

Are traditional burials and cemeteries negatively impacting public health? Do the chemicals used in the embalming process eventually neutralize over time thereby minimizing its impact on public health and environments?

Are the CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels used in the cremation process really harmful to public health? Although popular culture has embraced manmade CO₂ as an environmental pollutant is it possible that it is fact an insignificant contributor to the overall amount of natural CO₂ in the atmosphere?

Are green burials more beneficial for the environment and public health than traditional burial and cremation? Modern human bodies contain devices, implants, and a plethora of chemicals from medicines, etc., and plastics, which may not be so green after all?

These questions are only a sampling of the many that need answers. Will a comprehensive study reveal all of the answers? Of course not, but it will provide the answers to many questions and provide a pathway to new research by identifying areas that need to be investigated.

Why is SB 0671 important?

A comprehensive study would be cost effective by providing a resource to increase efficiency in providing accurate information readily to the multitude and greatly diverse inquiries received by the Office of Cemetery Oversight on a daily basis. The study would provide a foundation for not only inquiries, but assessments, future planning for periods when pandemics and other large scale death events occur. It is imperative that deathcare and funerary practices are sustainable for both environmental and public health purposes, that the diverse and changing needs and values of our society be addressed, and respect for people's wishes and dignity are honored.

Therefore, it is essential that our State's premier experts, the Office of Cemetery Oversight, which provides oversight of thousands of cemeteries and related industries be provided with a comprehensive study on the environmental and public health impacts of deathcare and funeral practices.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony, which is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Candy Warden

Rosa Bonheur Society, Inc. (founded May 2007)

2010 Periwinkle Award Winner, Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites