

RBS SB 0671 Testimony February 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: candy warden

Position: FAV

Candy Warden, President
Rosa Bonheur Society, Inc.
10240 Harvest Fields Drive
Woodstock, MD 22163
February 09, 2025

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

Senate_Bill_671.pdf

Uploaded by: Daniel Phelan

Position: FAV

Dear Chairpersons and Members of the Finance Committee

My name is Daniel J. Phelan, and I reside in Baltimore County, Maryland. I am a member of the Board of Directors of the Baltimore County Genealogical Society, and a retired hydrologist from the U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resources Division.

I am writing you to ask that you help support Senate Bill 671, Office of Cemetery Oversight—Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices which will allow for the creation of a study of the environmental and public health impacts of deathcare and funeral practices in the State; and generally relating to a study of deathcare and funeral practices.

Given the evolving business of funeral practices, it would be best to understand the environmental impacts of these practices and to determine the needs of permitting these businesses to insure environmentally-acceptable procedures. It would also be best that records be kept so that future generations Marylanders can find or determine the final resting places of their ancestors.

Thank you for your time and considering my input.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Phelan

MCLA.pdf

Uploaded by: David Zinner

Position: FAV



MCLA is a new group, formed in July of 2024. We've met weekly to discuss Maryland cemetery laws and how we can bring our real world experience to proposing improvements to those laws. We drafted language for seven bills that are in the legislative process in the House and Senate.

We are not professional lobbyists, nor are we paid for our work in Maryland's cemeteries. We have no paid staff. We don't even have a bank account. What we do have is passion and a belief that cemeteries show respect for the deceased, and that cemeteries are our history and our gift to future generations.

We are twelve Maryland citizens devoted to care, preservation, documentation and protection of all of Maryland's cemeteries. Our MCLA team represents hundreds of years of advocacy and hands-on cemetery care. We are multicultural, spanning ethnicities and religions. Our members have widespread and diverse experience and backgrounds, are bi-partisan, and come from different counties across the State.

MCLA puts a special emphasis on identification, preservation, care and when needed, restoration, of African American cemeteries. Our members are actively working with individual African American cemeteries or sections of cemeteries. We bring incarcerated citizens to learn about cemetery care, and participate in cemetery cleanups. We help identify African American cemeteries for grants.

MCLA members understand the importance of genealogy and actively work to document cemetery records and markers across the State. Our members work with statewide organizations to provide advice to Maryland's cemetery regulator and to educate Maryland citizens about the importance of cemeteries.

Maryland citizens can make a difference when they are actively involved in the legislative process. We are so grateful to our bill sponsors, three Republicans and four Democrats. And we are appreciative of the hearing process that allows us to explain the importance, need and impact of the bills that we initiated. Thank you for supporting legislation this session that will benefit all cemeteries in Maryland.

SB0671 - zinner testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: David Zinner

Position: FAV

Environment - SB0671 - Office of Cemetery Oversight – Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices

I'm David Zinner, Coordinator for the Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates (MCLA). Our group has extensive experience with cemetery issues. I've been a member of the Maryland Advisory Council for Cemetery Oversight (ACCO) for 12 years though my testimony today is not as a representative of the Council.

SB0671 will look at the environmental impact of deathcare and funeral practices in Maryland. I will emphasize just two significant areas of concern - crematory exhaust and arsenic treated wood and embalming fluid.

1. Crematory exhaust can be composed of:
 - a. Carbon Monoxide, Lead, Nitrogen Oxides, and Sulfur Dioxide
 - b. Particles of incomplete combustion in the air (smoke) a toxic pollutant that can bioaccumulate in tissues and is a possible human carcinogen.
 - c. Possible trace chemicals on the EPA list such as:
Acenaphthene, Acenaphthylene, Acetaldehyde, Anthracene, Arsenic, Benzo(a)anthracene, Benzo(a)pyrene, Benzo(b)fluoranthene, "Benzo(g,h,i)perylene", Benzo(k)fluoranthene, Beryllium, Cadmium, Chromium, Chrysene, Cobalt, "Dibenz(a,h)anthracene", Fluoranthene, Fluorene, Formaldehyde, Hydrogen, Hydrogen, "Indeno(1,2,3-cd)pyrene", Naphthalene, Nickel, Phenanthrene, Pyrene, Selenium
 - d. Mercury, a toxic pollutant that is a neurotoxin and can bioaccumulate in tissues from vaporized tooth fillings
 - e. There is also smell, which is much harder to measure. One customer reported on the smell at a crematory as follows:

“Pretty FOUL. Something like I have NEVER smelled in my whole life and a PUTRID smell I will NEVER forget. It smells of burning wood, urine, feces and rancid fat - ALL ROLLED INTO ONE FOUL SMELL.”

- f. While a modern cremator will generally include a re-burner, which is supposed to re-burn the gasses going up the chimney, this assumes that the cremator is working properly and regularly maintained and that older models are retrofitted.
 - g. For much more information about crematory emissions, see the EPA’s 2020 National Emissions Inventory Technical Support Document: Miscellaneous NonIndustrial NEC: Cremation – Human and Animal at https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-04/NEI2020_TSD_Section29_Cremation.pdf
2. An article published in the National Library of Medicine stated that “the burial of caskets with arsenic-treated wood and formaldehyde-based embalming fluids can harm the environment and health. Arsenic can leach into water, affecting aquatic life and the food chain. Formaldehyde can contaminate groundwater, risking drinking water and causing health problems.” Of course embalming fluid also impacts workers at funeral homes.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10970330/#:~:text=The%20burial%20of%20caskets%20with,water%20and%20causing%20health%20problems.>

Formaldehyde in buried bodies turns out to be a much higher risk to the water table than the decomposition of bodies that are not embalmed.

As you can see from this very short elaboration on just two areas, there is a great need to examine the environmental impact of these and other death care practices. Please support SB0671 to protect the health of the citizens of Maryland.

FWA_RevisedTestimony

Uploaded by: Jennifer Johnson

Position: FAV

SB0671 Office of Cemetery Oversight - Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices
Support FWA (Favorable with Amendments)

Jennifer Elsie Johnson, Founder Friends of St. Peter's Cemetery

Cemetery Address: 1301 Moreland Ave Baltimore MD 21216

Email: friendsofstpeterscemetery1851@gmail.com Phone: 410- 929- 2544

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Finance Committee Members,

My name is Jennifer Johnson and I am the Founder of Friends of St. Peter's Cemetery. The cemetery was opened in 1851 and is the hallowed ground for approximately 15,000 individuals who worked and lived in West Baltimore. My cemetery work has been recognized and honored by several local organizations and has been featured multiple times in the past few years on all local news networks.

At some point in time unfortunately every person in our state will die. We sadly lost many people unexpectedly during these last several years because of the COVID19 pandemic. It is important for us as a state to ensure proper environmental health. With more and more people opting for cremation it is important for us to understand how death care and funeral practices affect our environment.

I unfortunately could not provide oral testimony due to other commitments. However, I ask that you please support with amendments SB0671 Office of Cemetery Oversight - Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices. The amendments being requested are as follows: 1) drive the fiscal note down to approximately \$14, 200 maximum utilizing volunteers and students to complete the study; 2)keep open lines of communication and work with others that are interested in the success of this specific legislation in the Senate and House of Delegates special interest should be given to include but not necessarily be limited to the following members of the House of Delegates: Delegate Gary Simmons, Delegate Regina T. Boyce, Delegate Terri L. Hill, Delegate Ashanti Martinez, Delegate Ryan Nawrocki, Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Delegate Kathy Szeliga, Delegate Samuel Rosenberg and Delegate Pam Guzzone and allow them to give their approval on the finalized version of the legislation; 3) make sure this bill incorporates everything from HB0152 from the 2024 legislative session and 4) consider moving this from the Office of Cemetery Oversight (a team which is suffering from limited bandwidth and staffing shortages) to Department of the Environment. Thanks in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Elsie Johnson

Jennifer Elsie Johnson

Founder Friends of St. Peter's Cemetery

SB0671_FAV_Testimony_Jennifer Johnson.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Johnson

Position: FAV

SB0671 Office of Cemetery Oversight - Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices
Support FAV
Jennifer Elsie Johnson
Founder Friends of St. Peter's Cemetery
Cemetery Address: 1301 Moreland Ave Baltimore MD 21216
Email: friendsofstpeterscemetery1851@gmail.com
Phone: 410- 929- 2544

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I unfortunately, could not provide oral testimony due to other commitments. However, I ask that you please support SB0671 Office of Cemetery Oversight - Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Elsie Johnson

Jennifer Elsie Johnson
Founder Friends of St. Peter's Cemetery

6-Study of deathcare and funeral practices testimo

Uploaded by: Christine Simmons

Position: FWA

DRAFT 2

HB711/SB671-FAV-Office of Cemetery Oversight-Study of Deathcare and Funeral Home Practices-FWA

Christine Simmons
521 West Drive
Severna Park, MD 21146
410-978-7167

I believe the entire subject of deathcare and funeral practices is due for a review since there have been so many changes in this industry within this century. The majority of individuals are no longer buried intact or buried in private family cemeteries on their homesteads. There is a whole range of options, but most deceased and families of the deceased have opted for cremations. Laws regarding air and ground water pollution are much more stringent than they were 50 years ago.

I have been researching cemeteries and those buried in them for 40 years for the Anne Arundel Genealogical Society. This enables people researching their family histories to more easily identify where to search for information on their ancestors. Very few obituaries or death certificates in recent times include information on the final disposition of the deceased. Making this even more difficult is the fact that there is no requirement for funeral homes to hold onto their records. I know of a funeral home that only saves their records for two years. There is no requirement for funeral homes, more of whom are going out of business these days, to send their records to a repository such as the Maryland State Archives. There is a general response by many funeral homes that their records cannot be viewed by non-relatives due to "privacy" issues. That same information is already available on public death certificates. Restrictions can easily be included that the records cannot be viewed for a given amount of time, the same as is currently required for death certificates.

Funeral homes, health departments, and state attorneys' offices are all required to sign off on permits for burials as well as to disinter and reinter bodies or even whole cemeteries yet there is no process on who holds those permits after this has been accomplished. If a body is moved from one location to another, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to locate the final location.

Another item that should be addressed is whether there have been any significant changes to the way the military interacts with local funeral homes when the deceased will not be buried in a military cemetery. Are those records retained by the military, the funeral home or both and who has access to those records?

I believe these are also important issues that need to be evaluated. Times change, customs change, and the physical landscape where these remains are placed all need to be re-evaluated.

I look forward to your support of this bill.

SB 671 02-20-2025_MCCA_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: John Stierhoff

Position: FWA

John R. Stierhoff, Esquire
(410) 244-7833
jrstierhoff@venable.com

February 20, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 671 – Office of Cemetery Oversight – Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices

Dear Chair Beidle:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Cemetery and Cremation Association (“MCCA”) in Support with Amendments of Senate Bill 671.

Senate Bill 671 requires the Office of Cemetery Oversight, in consultation with other executive departments, to conduct a comprehensive study of the impacts of deathcare and funeral practices on the environment and public health of the State.

On page 3, lines 18 through 26, the Office of Cemetery Oversight is required to solicit input from a number of trade groups and organizations. The Maryland Cemetery and Cremation Association respectfully requests to be included with the named trade groups and organizations.

Founded in 1916, the MCCA represents the shared interests and concerns of professionals across the spectrum of Maryland’s “death care” industries.

Thank you for your consideration of the Amendment to Senate Bill 671.

Sincerely,

John R. Stierhoff

cc: Members, Senate Finance Committee

MSFDA SB671 Position 20250218.pdf

Uploaded by: Walter Nathan Malloy Jr.

Position: FWA



Maryland State Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

519 Mabe Drive, Woodbine, MD 21797

Phone: 410-553-7706

Email: msfda@msfda.net ▪ Web Site: www.msfda.net

Senate Bill 671 (2025)

Office of Cemetery Oversight – Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices

Position of the Maryland State Funeral Directors Association, Inc.: FAVORABLE WITH AMMENDMENTS

- Senate Bill 671 (2025) directs the “Office of Cemetery Oversight, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Department of Labor, and the Department of the environment to conduct a comprehensive study of the impacts of deathcare and funeral practices on the environment and public health of the State.” (proposed language of Senate Bill 671 (2025))
- Since 1919 The Maryland State Funeral Directors Association Inc. has been dedicated to professionalism, integrity, and the highest ethical standards in funeral service in Maryland. Our membership is comprised of funeral service professionals who have committed their lives to serving the needs of the families of Maryland at the time of death of a loved one.
- Section(e)(3) of Senate Bill 671 (2025) identifies specific trade groups and organizations from whom the Office of Cemetery Oversight shall solicit input from like the Funeral Consumer Alliance, Green Burial Council, and the Coalition to Protect Maryland Burial Sites, yet fails to specifically identify the Maryland State Funeral Directors Association Inc. The Maryland State Funeral Directors Association Inc. is a tremendous resource for knowledge and information regarding funeral practices, customs, and ethics in Maryland.
- The Maryland State Funeral Directors Association Inc. respectfully requests that Senate Bill 671 Section (e)(3) (page 3, lines 19 – 25) be amended to specifically include the Maryland State Funeral Directors Association Inc. as one of the “trade groups and organizations” from whom the Office of Cemetery Oversight shall solicit input regarding the Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices in Maryland.

MDE SB671 INF.pdf

Uploaded by: Jeremy D. Baker

Position: INFO



The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain

Senate Bill 671

Office of Cemetery Oversight - Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices

Position: Informational
Committee: Finance
Date: February 20, 2025
From: Alex Butler, Deputy Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) offers the following **INFORMATIONAL** testimony on SB 671.

Bill Summary

Senate Bill 671 would require the Office of Cemetery Oversight (Office) under the Maryland Department of Labor, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Department of Labor, and the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE), to conduct a comprehensive study on the environmental and public health impacts of death care and funeral practices in Maryland.

Position Rationale

As proposed, SB 671 would require MDE to consult with the Office on:

- (1) MDE's permitting and licensure processes for facilities and professionals engaged in death care;
- (2) the environmental impacts of each specific death care and funeral practice; and
- (3) related public health and equity issues.

Given the comprehensive nature of the study, the need for scientific analysis, the requirement for stakeholder engagement, and a challenging budgetary landscape for the Department and the State, MDE recommends that the interim report deadline be extended from December 1, 2025, to September 1, 2026. This will better allow agencies time to collect and analyze data before making preliminary recommendations. MDE would also recommend moving the final report deadline from July 1, 2026 to at least Dec 31, 2026, providing additional time for comprehensive policy analysis, environmental testing, and regulatory review.

MDE respectfully requests the Committee consider this **INFORMATIONAL** testimony on SB 671.

SB 671 Office of Cemetery Oversight - Study of Dea

Uploaded by: John Dove

Position: INFO

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR LETTER OF INFORMATION ON SB671.

TO: Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Deborah Rappazzo, Executive Director, Office of Cemetery Oversight
DATE: February 20, 2025
BILL: SB671 - Office of Cemetery Oversight - Study of Deathcare and Funeral Practices

Senate Bill 671 establishes a workgroup to conduct a study of the environmental and public health impacts of death care and funeral practices in Maryland. At the direction of the Office of Cemetery Oversight (“OCO”), the workgroup will consult with the Maryland Department of Health, the Maryland Department of Labor and the Department of the Environment to articulate their findings and provide a report to the Governor on or before July 1, 2026.

The OCO is a small self-funded unit. When fully staffed, the OCO consists of a total of three full-time employees and one part-time employee. Due to OCO’s limited staffing, the OCO will have to increase staff to handle the new duties created by Senate Bill 671. Furthermore, since the OCO is a self-funded unit, it will be challenging for the OCO to absorb the additional staffing and legal expenses that will be necessary to fulfill the goals of this study.

For questions, please contact Andrew Fulginiti, at Andrew.Fulginiti@maryland.gov

www.labor.maryland.gov