

# SB1021

March 11, 2025

Position: Favorable

## Business Regulation-Cemeteries-Requirements for Sale or Transfer of Government Acquisition

Senator Jackson, Senator Muse and members of the committee,

My name is Donna Nelson, and I am representing the descendants associated with the 146-year-old Point of Rocks Colored Cemetery. 1879 in Frederick County Maryland.

I am providing a written testimony today in support of SB1021.

I want to express my heartfelt thoughts regarding the importance of the bill we are discussing today. If this legislation had been in place two years ago when I sought information on how we, as descendants, could take ownership of the 164-year-old cemetery purchased by the trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Point of Rocks for just fifty dollars, our journey would have been significantly different.

Through diligent research and with prayers guiding my efforts, I was able to locate the original deed, which confirms that no other parties had taken possession since the cemetery's original purchase. Despite this unmistakable evidence of our ancestral claim, the Office of Cemetery Oversight (OCO) did not have any land or location, only the name of the cemetery. Unfortunately, they were unable to provide us with the guidance or advice we needed to secure ownership, which would have allowed us to access grants and funding for its preservation.

This cemetery has been cared for by generations of our families, but as many of us are now aging, the urgency to protect and preserve this sacred landscape has become even more critical. It took us almost two years to receive an order for a quiet title deed through the courts, and we were finally granted ownership on February 18<sup>th</sup>(see attached).

If this bill had been in place earlier, we, as descendants, would have been authorized to transfer ownership to our community much sooner, ensuring that we could protect and honor our ancestors.

Thank you for considering the importance of this legislation for families and communities like ours in the state of Maryland.

