

HB0724 Commission On Abandoned And Neglected Maryland Cemeteries.

I'm David Zinner, Coordinator for the Maryland Cemetery Legislative Advocates (MCLA). Our group has extensive experience with cemetery issues.

I am also a consumer representative on Maryland's Advisory Council on Cemetery Operations, but I am not representing the Council or the Office of Cemetery Oversight.

HB0724 establishes a commission to address the problems of abandoned and neglected cemeteries in Maryland. We believe there are hundreds of cemeteries that are in these categories, ranging from small religious or family cemeteries, to larger cemeteries where ownership is unclear and where neglect, vandalism and trespassing has become a major community issue.

The commission will not be able to immediately solve all of the problems of abandoned and neglected cemeteries, but it can be instrumental in these areas, to name just a few:

1. Identifying where abandoned and neglected cemeteries are located
2. Consulting with local jurisdictions regarding solutions
3. Leveraging local resources including volunteers, in-kind donations of services and the development of cemetery care training programs

Establishing a commission is an important first step in recognizing the importance of care, preservation, documentation and protection of all of Maryland's cemeteries. We believe a commission can put a special emphasis on identification, preservation, care, and when needed, restoration, of African American cemeteries.

Our cemeteries show respect for the deceased. They are our history and our gift to future generations.

Please support HB0724.